

Text: Acts 9:31, Title: Peace, Encouragement, and Multiplication, Date/Place: The Road, 3/19/17, AM

- A. **Opening illustration: Pax Romana: Augustus, rest from war, rather than all opponents beaten down, population growth to 70 million, expanse of roads, infrastructure, architecture and the arts, 206 years of relative stability to a nation that had been at war for the better part of 500 years.**
- B. Background to passage: This verse is a summary statement of the passages dealing from Stephen's death through Saul's conversion. It is a statement that will lay a foundation for the readers for the events and chapters to come. It's pretty self-explanatory, and that is why we gloss over it so quickly. However, this morning I would like to just read through it, slowly ruminating on what is being said.
- C. Main thought: we will see the major seeds of growth for this season of the church

A. **Rest from Suffering**

1. The first thing that Luke notes is that peace has come, even it is a short respite, to the church (first time in a universal sense). The church in all of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee has some rest from its suffering because it's chief persecutor has become its chief champion. They were not being pursued and hunted down as ruthlessly, maybe not at all in some places. The text is imperfect tense meaning continuing peace
2. Argumentation
3. **Illustration: rest from allergies, from cancer, from chronic pain, sometimes just a rest of your mind. Did you ever see the kid's movie Open Season? I have wondered before if deer knew that there was a time when they were being hunted? If so, at some point do they realize that they are no longer being hunted? Might they find rest? Or do their cares turn to other things to lose sleep over.**
4. This peace spoken of is a reality of peace where perceived "bad things" are not happening. The peace that passes all understanding is that where "bad things" are happening, but our hearts and minds are finding our rest in Christ to be our rock, our shield, and our sufficiency. Let us rejoice when things are peaceful in our lives, and let us rejoice when things are not peaceful, but we are at peace because of the Prince of Peace. We can only do that by having placed our faith in his salvation, now putting our faith in his goodness.

B. **Strengthening from Weakness**

1. Luke mentions next that the church was being built up. During a time of peace resources can be replenished, strategies thought through, exercises and training take place, storage can be built up, and lives can be enriched. The verb is passive, so note that God is doing the building. He is putting people in places in the churches. He is maturing believers, taking them deeper in their walk with Christ. Again, this is an imperfect verb signifying continuing action.
2. Argumentation
3. **Illustration: Just as it would be for an adult to be 50 years old and act like a child (remember, I am not speaking about those who have a disability), it is truly a sad state of affairs for a church to be 100, 200, 300 years old, and yet still have about the same level of maturity they had when they were 25.**
4. God's intention for each one of you is to glorify himself as you are conformed to the image of Christ. God does put his perfection on display through weakness, but that doesn't mean that we are to remain babes in Christ permanently. We are to pursue the knowledge and experience of Christ that we may know him and be used by him, and be shaped by him. Sanctification is an ongoing process for all of us, even us as church. How do you see yourself becoming more and more like Christ? Fix your eyes on the cross, think about it, meditate on it and the exchange that we made for you. Remove hindrances that might keep you from being molded:

C. **Fear of God not of Man**

1. This may be the most interesting piece to Luke's seeds of preparation. He says that the church was walking in the fear of the Lord. This fear is a reverent godliness to be aware of his innate holiness, and hatred of sin. The OT has many references to the fear of the Lord and to its benefits. It was walking right then, fearing God to the point that God would commend them for it eternally here. He was pleased with their walk with Him in relation to sin, wrath, judgment, and holiness.
2. Argumentation
3. **Illustration: Great lesson on this on Sunday night, about how Christ was punished for my pride or whatever our particular sin was,**

4. Look to the cross as a demonstration of God's wrath upon sin. Remember that his was poured out on one that knew no sin. We too easily forget the cost of the forgiveness of our sin. We too easily forget God's hatred of it. When we do, we become lackadaisical in our pursuit of holiness. What pet sins in your life make light of the holiness that crushed Christ for us?

D. **Encouragement from the Holy Spirit**

1. Most translations read "comfort of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit definitely is our comforter, and is called that by name several times in scripture, but this same work can be translated encourager. If it had been placed in the first of the verse, comfort might be more readable, but I think Luke meant that the Holy Spirit (in addition to the fact that they were walking in the fear of the Lord) encouraged them to further the ministry. So in essence these final two (and really all of these four, because they are in the Greek one long sentence) led to the final testimony of multiplication.
2. Argumentation
3. Illustration:
4. The cross of Jesus Christ earned for those who believe salvation. The down payment, according to Ephesians, was the Holy Spirit. It is the assurance that he would complete salvation and glorification. The Spirit's ministry is multi-faceted, but as it relates to this text, the question that we must ask deal with our obedience to the encouraging of the Spirit. He leads us in our daily life to abide in Christ. He will be constantly prompting us and impressing us to go and do this or that, pray on this or that, to cry out to him for that and that. This is not some hyper-spiritual, mystical voice that we hear; it's a day to day awareness of what God may use us for. Stopping by a friend's house, turning around in the road, helping a child with a basketball goal.

E. **Growth in Number and Depth**

1. Explanation
2. Argumentation
3. Illustration:
4. Application

- A. Closing illustration:
- B. Recap
- C. Invitation to commitment

Additional Notes

- **Is Christ Exalted, Magnified, Honored, and Glorified?**