

THE BOOK OF ACTS
"The Ideal Church"
Acts 9:31

Feb 10, 1985

INTRODUCTION

1. Saul (Hebrew name for Greek Paul) was converted to believe on Jesus as Messiah and Redeemer while on the Damascus Road (vv. 1-9). His persecuting hate was turned to faith.
2. In Damascus, Paul was commissioned as a chosen vessel by Ananias (vv. 10-25). He immediately preached, but the Jews sought to kill him.
3. It was Barnabas (son of comfort/encouragement) who introduced Paul to the believers at Jerusalem (vv. 26-31). Apparently he preached to Hellenistic Jews who then tried to kill him (v. 29). Friends helped Paul to get to Tarsus in Cilicia via ship (v. 30). Now that the chief persecutor of the church (believers) was converted, certain results are evident:

1. HARMONY "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria."

a. Who?

"Churches" is probably a reference to "local" churches. While this word may be singular in the best texts, it is a reference to local assemblies first and then to the universal body of believers. They are "called out" assemblies.

b. Where?

Three areas are mentioned: Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. This is the only mention of Galilee in Acts. Praise God--believers were everywhere at this early stage of the church.

c. What?

The verb "had peace" is imperfect tense. It denotes an enjoyment of peace because the persecution had ceased. There were no discordant notes. The greatest hinderance to church growth is lack of harmony and concord. We need to pray for this, work for it, and believe God for it.

2. GROWTH "and were edified"

a. Meaning

The verb is a present passive participle, hence linear action is meant. Being passive, the idea is that external influence is involved--the work of the Holy Spirit.

b. Significance

While Acts does not give a doctrinal base, the

suggestions here. Growth is indicated (2 Pet. 3:18). Love does it (1 Cor. 8:1). It demands spiritually minded believers (1 Cor. 2, 3), thus believers with a capacity for the deep things of God. This will bring about "established" members in the church (Col. 2:7).

3. REVERENCE "walking in the fear of the Lord"

a. Action

The verb "walking" is really the verb to depart or to walk in the general activities of life. It is a consistent item and controls both "fear" and "comfort."

b. Sphere

It is true that God has not given us the spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:17) and it is agreed that perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:8), yet this text must have a reckoning. What is this fear? It is not apprehension, but love for God on its knees. It suggests the idea of being humble and obedient before Him. The point is that the believer would not want in any way to disappoint or fail Him. Oh, not to grieve, doubt, dishonor, or misrepresent our blessed Lord.

4. SPIRITUALITY

a. Person involved

The Holy Spirit is the key. It is "comfort" which belongs to Him. The necessity of being controlled by the Spirit is patent (cf. Eph. 5:18).

b. Pattern intended

This is the only instance of the word "comfort" in Acts. Several ideas are included in the word:

- 1) Exhortation Apparently this was practised among the saints (cf. Heb. 10:25).
- 2) Entreaty Here is gentle effort to encourage positive responses.
- 3) Encouragement This relates to the idea of comfort and solace.

NOTE: A local assembly which has Spirit-controlled saints involved in these blessed exercises will be loaded with precious souls who yearn for this sort of treatment.

5. INCREASE "was multiplied"

Here is the apex of everything. The use of the imperfect middle/passive form is significant. The multiplication of the assembly kept pace with the peace, the edification, the walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Multiplication must include the winning of souls.

CONCLUSION The ideal church of our text has evident characteristics: It is peaceful, growing, fearing God, comforting, and multiplying. God give us this kind of church for Thy eternal glory!