

Churches walking in the fear of the Lord (Quality: Good)

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[0 : 00] Will you turn this evening to the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 9, and to the 31st verse.

And I trust that with the Lord's enabling we might be profited as we consider this verse, Acts 9.31. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified.

And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied. Saul of Tarsus had been brought to know Christ.

The record is there in the same chapter in the earlier part. And accounts for the then with which this verse begins.

Then had the churches rest. And oh, it was a notable conversion. The conversion of that man.

[1 : 16] And it brought with it the intermission of Jewish opposition. For a little anyway. For this Jewish opposition had become a persecution.

You only need to turn to the end of the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Not only to see that the opposition of the Jews had become persecution, but to see the part that this man Saul had in these things.

There at the end of Acts chapter 7 there is the stoning of Stephen. And they cast him out of the city and stoned him.

And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen.

And in the beginning of the eighth chapter you see the persecution. You see more of the role that Saul had in it.

[2 : 23] Saul was consenting unto his death. He was not unwilling. He was not one who was seeking that Stephen might be released.

He was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem.

And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Except the apostles. We read in chapter 8 verse 3 As for Saul, as for Saul he made havoc of the church.

Entering into every house and hailing men and women committed them to prison. What a man Saul of Tarsus was when he years later was to write by inspiration of the Holy Ghost that which is recorded in 1 Timothy 1 and in the verses before and inclusive of the 15th verse.

How eloquent are these words when he said who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious.

[3 : 43] The word injurious, I looked it up to see what it meant. It means insolently violent. He committed outrages against the people of God. Who would have been the arch-persecutor of this day of persecution.

Saul of Tarsus was his name. And yet that man was in the eternal counsel of God predestinated to be a preacher of the gospel.

And you notice that there's even a glimpse of it there that in a day when he was intent on mischief against the people of God.

And when he was most unwillingly involved and most indirectly involved yet it was true that there was an expansion of gospel truth because the very persecution that he took such an active part in caused there to be a scattering abroad.

Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. And the very wrath of men is so often made to praise Almighty God.

[5 : 01] And the very mischief that this man was intent upon was overruled to the extension of Christ's kingdom. But all the difference when this man was converted and there was an abatement of persecution there was somewhat of a lull so much so that we read which then had the churches rest.

And this some people say how could it possibly be that the churches had rest? They had a measure of peace from the persecutor because this one man was converted.

Ah but what a man that was. What a man was Saul of Tarsus. And when this man was converted to God there was such astonishment struck in the hearts of those that were on his side that there was necessarily an abatement in their intention at least for a season.

But also secular history tells us another matter came upon the scene which distracted the Jewish authorities from the persecution of Christians.

Caligula Roman Emperor had decreed that a statue should be set up to himself and worshipped in the temple. And in the horror that this created in the hearts of these Jewish religionists they for a little time turned from the persecution of Christians.

[6 : 39] But it was soon that once again in evidence and Saul of Tarsus in days ahead was the very target of the enmity and the hatred.

Perhaps a greater hatred did they feel to this man than many another because of what he had been. It's often the way. It's also often the way that what a man has been in a way comes back and will affect him in the days ahead.

He had been an arch persecutor. He was to know what it was to be persecuted. and this is of great significance and interest to us.

But we leave the conversion of this man simply noting it to account for the then at the commencement of the verse then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied.

It is an unusual thing then that they were granted rest or peace. We are not very long granted that. There are those that profess to be Christians of course that continually are at peace with others but it is because they know nothing of the reality of grace within them for if they did they would not be able for long to live at peace.

[8 : 13] We would live peaceably with all men. We pray that we might be able so to live but yet those that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

And there is no exception to it. It seems to me that those that will godly will live godly in this present world shall suffer persecution even if it be the persecution of one's own family.

Ungodly members of one's family can be bitter opposers and bitter persecutors. And there can be a hatred where there was a love. And there can be that divisive sword that comes in and things are never the same.

And grace comes. This is often the portion. It can be that a man's foes will be those with whom he has worked and been in terms of cordiality until grace changes him and then there's a difference.

Very soon there is a resentment and then there is a criticism and then there is an opposition and soon there will be but for the restraint that God may be pleased to place around his servant there might well be that bitter persecution.

[9 : 33] There might even be that physical harm. it's no easy thing to be a Christian. Therefore if many never know these things one questions that they have ever experienced Christ.

Christ has ever been formed in their hearts. And if you hold to the truth of God and if you let it be known where you stand and if you are one that will not move from the revelation that God has given in his word you won't be lacking in enemies but neither will you be lacking in the resources of your God and the invisible bulwarks around you will be proof against all that they may do.

God be for us who can be against us. It was an unusual thing that these churches should have rest for a season. But there is an even more remarkable and unusual thing I judge in the statement of this verse and that is that the churches having rest because of these circumstances consequent upon the conversion of Saul of Tarsus that they were edified.

It's not always the case that when conditions change when the stress ceases for a little that there is edification. Often when the stress is removed from us we tend to become much looser in our attitude to the things of the Lord.

How often that is the case have we not proved it to be so. Some of our best times have been the times of the direst trial. Some of our best times have been the times of the deepest disappointments even of bereavement when we have been cast upon the Lord because there was simply nowhere else we could go but to the Lord.

[11 : 33] And when we were brought into comparative rest it has not been so good for us spiritually. We have become much weaker.

We have had less to cause us to go to the throne of grace calling upon the name of the Lord begging for daily help and strength for the living of our days.

So it is a remarkable thing to read here that when they had these conditions of peace not only were individual believers edified but churches were edified.

We are told that the churches throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria were edified. They were not brought into that condition of being at ease in Zion which is a deadly condition for any company that profess the name of Christ to be at ease in Zion.

Perhaps it's good for our little causes to know what it is to be up against it. To know that there is humanly speaking very little between their continuance and their demise.

[12 : 47] It's only the difference that grace makes. Perhaps that's a good thing. the large congregations are not always the most spiritual. The large churches are so often of a Laodicean spirit, rich and increased with goods, lacking nothing.

But in the eyes of Christ destitute, naked, blind, we should thank God for everything that even when there is comparative rest and we haven't the persecution that they had in the day described in these earlier chapters, we don't have that persecution.

Please God, we may not know it. But we still have some opposition and there is still that continual awareness that we are those that are in a place that is not our home.

We are in an alien environment and there is that need for constant watch for us. But all that we might be such as are edified in the comparative rest that we've got, that we might be those that use it.

You should use it. You don't know when the privilege of meeting as you do tonight might be removed from you, or you removed from coming to the house of God, illness of such a nature that you're never able again to enter into a chapel that could come upon you.

[14 : 21] It's come upon others. Use the rest. Use the comparative advantages that you have now for you know not what the day may bring forth.

You know not what lies ahead. Use the comparative rest that you've been given in order that you might be built up, that you might use the opportunities now granted to against a day when you will know such intensity of trial as you have never known in the past.

How wise it is. We need to be wise as serpents, though harmless, God grant as doves. They had rest, and they were edified.

They were being built up. The household of faith was being built up and in those churches, those churches of Judea and Galilee and Samaria.

And the result of this edification we're told in the verse was this. They were walking in the fear of the Lord. What is the supreme test of being built up spiritually?

[15 : 37] It's spirituality of life. It doesn't say that they were built up and in consequence they were materially prospering.

And their members were advanced into higher and higher positions. No doubt that a very reverse was happening. But it says that they were being edified and in consequence of that they were walking in the fear of the Lord and that's the thing that matters.

Is the church walking in the fear of the Lord or is it not? And if it's not walking in the fear of the Lord well what's all its testimony about?

and what's all its witness worth? And I wonder these days if we're walking in the fear of the Lord and I wonder in other places are they walking in the fear of the Lord?

Lord but this is the place that we have been placed in in God's providence. The question is addressed to us are we walking in the fear of the Lord?

[16 : 46] Are we being edified? Yes we're being built up. Yes we're growing in grace. Well are we being edified walking that is continuing going on moving living in the fear of the Lord?

And then it says there was a second consequence and I want to take it this way which may not be quite as familiar to you as we usually take it.

I want to suggest to you that the second consequence of their being edified was that in the comfort of the Holy Ghost they were multiplied. In the comfort of the Holy Ghost they were multiplied.

The word comfort being the word which means strength by the assistance of by the coming alongside of the advocacy of it's the same word that gives us advocate.

In 1 John 1 verse 2 we have an advocate with the Father. We have the comforter. The comforter is the paraclete. It's this word. It is to do with that ministry of the Holy Ghost.

[18 : 01] God's God's God's God's God's ministry of the Holy Ghost. By the advocacy, by the standing alongside of the Holy Ghost that there was this multiplying, that there was this increase and this enlargement in these churches.

Remarkable in the Acts of the Apostles how the Spirit of God is brought before as it is continually there in these chapters of the Acts we see the demonstration of the Spirit and power.

The Spirit on the day of Pentecost given. The promise of Christ fulfilled tarry at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.

Ye shall be witnesses then unto me in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. And the Spirit of God was given and the Spirit of God not just given in the phenomena of the day of Pentecost but in the power that accompanied Peter's preaching.

They were pricked in their heart. Men and brethren what shall we do? And in these early chapters the Spirit of God is very prominent and the very despite done to the Spirit of God by Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 means that they end their journey in this life.

[19 : 33] They die, these two, that sinned against the Holy Ghost. And there was great fear upon others but there was the additions.

Many were added. Many believed in the name of the Lord. How by the Spirit it is by the Spirit of God that there was the demonstration of power in the hearts of men and women.

It was by the comfort of the Holy Ghost that there was this multiplication. Always is. We'll come back to that presently.

But notice one or two other things before we look a little more in detail at these characteristics in this period of rest. All the churches it says, the churches in all of these areas, Judea and Galilee and Samaria.

Here is, you see, the fulfillment of the promise. When the Spirit is come, ye shall be witnesses. There was that scattering forth and there was that taking of the gospel.

[20 : 42] There is this reference to Galilee, the only reference to Galilee and the gospel after the gospels themselves. And it is a very sweet thought to us that where the disciples mainly came from and where Christ's ministry had been for so much of his public preaching in Galilee that there were those churches in Galilee and in Judea and in Samaria churches.

Notice it says churches. And the old version, the old text, the received text from which our authorized version stems, it says churches because churches is there, the Holy Ghost said churches.

But you look up the modern versions and it says church. The Spirit of God says churches. The modern versions say church.

There is a big difference between church in that modern sense and churches. We don't go very much for the church of England. We are concerned about churches in England.

There is a big difference between the church and the churches. And God's way is with churches. There is no ground, I believe.

[22 : 09] However, there may be bishops and others that would rise in contention and be united in their argument with me.

There is nothing in the New Testament that sanctions a church. In a collective sense there are churches, the churches of Galatia, the churches in all these places, Judea and Galilee and Samaria.

You see that there is a subtle change made in the translations. It's not just that they would be up to date. There is a change. There is a subversion of the word of God.

And we must be ever alert to it. And the old is better. The old is certainly better. What God has given us. It's churches, not church. Thank God there were these churches.

We see the power of the Spirit of God upon the word of those that were scattered forth upon the death of Stephen bringing into being these churches.

[23 : 16] And these are the churches of which we are told that they are walking in the fear of the Lord. And these are the churches where in the comfort of the Holy Ghost they are being multiplied.

Now what is this walking in the fear of the Lord? And you know that I've spoken on this many times recently, the fear of the Lord. In the individual heart.

And I don't want to say too much about it in consequence. I remind you of what we mean by the fear of the Lord. We don't mean as you know a slavish terror, a slavish fear.

Though there will be in the fear of the Lord something of an awe and there will be something of a terror in the way God brings us to himself.

We must see ourselves as undone. We must see ourselves as lost and ruined by the fall. And in the process of that the Spirit of God will work bondage within us until we are brought to have a glimpse of the terrors of law.

[24 : 23] And how it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But when we are brought then to see the way to God in Christ, when we are brought to that rest and that peace which is an abiding peace, not just for a season, but for time and for eternity, a reconciled God and us brought to be reconciled unto God by the blood of Christ.

When we are brought to see the need and the necessity of Christ, when we are brought to know an interest in Christ, and we realize that God has wrought in our hearts and put the fear of his blessed name within us.

This is the fear of the Lord that is described in so many scriptures. This is the fear of the Lord which was conspicuous in these churches, that they were walking in the fear of the Lord.

Not slavish fear then, but filial fear. The fear of those that have been brought to know God. They have been brought into that place where they know God for who he is.

They have been brought into the place of adoration. They still feel awe those that fear the Lord. They have discovered their need of Christ and they will never know anything other than the need of Christ.

[25 : 43] That belongs to the fear of the Lord. And if you have the fear of the Lord then you will never want to be far from Christ. And you will never want to be taken up with any other than Christ. And you will want to view all things as he would have you view them.

And do those things which are according to his will. And your desire would be that you become more like him. And your concern is that you feel to be so far from him and so unlike him.

And that's the fear of the Lord. And the fear of the Lord is when we have a concern to do his will. And when the precepts that he speaks are as a law to us.

We are not under the condemning law. But we are under the law of liberty. The royal law. The law of Christ. Whatsoever he saith unto you do it. And we want to do it. And it is the grief within us that indwelling sin stops us doing what we would.

The good we would we do it not. And the evil that we would not that we do. But we are in a conflict and we know that we are in a conflict. That's the fear of the Lord.

[26 : 49] The flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. And we are those that know something of the covenant and love to hear of covenant truth and covenant engagements and love to rest and covenant promises.

That's the fear of the Lord. And we believe in a covenant ordered in all things and sure. Though my house be not so with God yet hath he established made with me an everlasting covenant.

covenant. This is my salvation. This is my desire though we make it not to grow. And all that matters is to know the covenant and the one who is the mediator of the covenant and to know covenant blessings flowing to us through him.

That's what it is to serve God acceptably. To come to his people to be found with others of like mind. That's the fear of the Lord. If a person says that I'm walking in the fear of the Lord and there's no relationship to the gospel church there's something wrong with his statement.

Something wrong with his understanding. If a man or woman is unconcerned with true worship and yet says he walks in the fear of the Lord then there's something wrong. He's deluded somewhere.

[28 : 05] For if we're in the fear of the Lord we will be concerned with the Lord's day and the Lord's house and the Lord's people and the Lord's worship. And he's shown us. He has shown us how we are to walk before him.

Not for us to invent ways and say that this is what pleases us. It's what pleases him that counts. Worship in spirit and truth. Oh that we might be those individually in the fear of the Lord.

But this you see is more than individuals. These are churches walking in the fear of the Lord. Then have the churches rest and were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord.

But then the churches are made up of the individual believers. So you can't say that there are churches that are walking in the fear of the Lord if individual believers aren't walking in the fear of the Lord that make up these churches.

You can't have a blessed church if there is no growth in grace and if there is backsliding in the constituent members of that church.

[29 : 08] there are those that seem to think that if they join certain churches that have the marks of of approbation upon them they may have it's not for us to say but that this will do their souls good.

It may do their souls good but it won't guarantee that their souls will be done any good except they walk themselves individually in the fear of the Lord. And these individual believers walking in the fear of the Lord as I've sought to delineate in a few words these make up the members of these churches and these are churches walking in the fear of the Lord.

But then let us try to see are there marks of churches walking in the fear of the Lord. I believe there are marks of churches walking in the fear of the Lord and I would say to you that a church walking in the fear of the Lord is a church concerned for worship.

Concerned that there might be the appointment and the maintenance and the ordering of all things that are according to the word of God for the worship of his name.

Now that's the business of local churches. The business of local churches is not to become involved in social effort. Good as that may be it's not the business of local churches to be involved in that.

[30 : 32] It's not that local churches should be caught up in political or quasi-political movements. That's not the business of local churches. Business of local churches is the business of Christ the King and the providing for and the maintenance and the continuance of things agreeable to his word.

That in these ways of the Lord we might meet and do what is pleasing in his sight and as he gives us enabling and as he shows us it's his will we'll be involved in the other things if it be right that we should.

That needs to be said and it not only needs to be said but it needs to be maintained in a day such as ours when there are so-called churches in which the last thing that seems to concern members and deacons and pastors is the work of worship and the things to do with the preaching of the gospel because there's another mark of a church that's in the fear of the Lord it will be concern for the preaching of the gospel.

A concern for the word of God. The word of God will be central. It won't be some band of young people playing their instruments that will be the center of the church's life if it's in the fear of the Lord.

It will be a concern for the worship that is in the will of God and for the word of God to be preached as he has shown that this is his mind and will.

[32 : 03] And it will be another mark of the church that's in the fear of the Lord that there is a faithful practice of discipline. Peter was told that to him were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

And you know that that doesn't mean that there is a primacy of the papacy or any such thing but it means that to the local church and the local church as it will continue until Christ comes there is a degree of authority given.

Not that men can decree the salvation of others whether they be saved or lost that's God's prerogative. But in matters of the discipline of the local church there are keys entrusted to the churches and those who are set apart by the churches as the ministers of the gospel for pastors and teachers and the deacons they have that commitment of the keys of discipline.

And the church must be ordered aright and no matter of love as we would seek to have love to the brethren will rule out the requirement of discipline.

The church needs to be governed well. The church will be in the fear of the Lord where discipline matters. It's not an easy thing to do. We don't like the very thought of it. We have sought over the years to practice discipline in this church.

[33 : 30] It's been a costly thing to do. Not to say that it doesn't matter that every man do that which seemeth in its own right. To maintain the doctrine, to maintain the practice has been a costly thing.

But it belongs to the fear of the Lord. And how can a man say that he's in the fear of the Lord when he's more in the fear of men? What they will say or what they will do to him?

If we're in the fear of the Lord then we are more concerned what the Lord thinks of us. One whose eyes are as a flame of fire as he looks upon us what does he see?

Does it please him how the assembly is ordered? These are marks of the fear of the Lord in the church and the earnest proclamation of the gospel by the way we live.

And by the everyday witness of the members of the church as I so often stress as well as the preached word from the pulpit and prayerful concern for churches.

[34 : 36] Without a vision the people perish. We're not just concerned for ourselves we're concerned for others. Like minded companies we're told here not just of the church of Jerusalem as we were told that it was the first church and it was scattered after the persecution and only the apostles remained behind but we're told of these other churches.

Churches in Judea, churches in Galilee, churches in Samaria and we are concerned for other churches. Churches of same faith and order to ourselves.

We're concerned for those also that are not same faith and order as ourselves that they might be brought to the word, that they might be regulated by the word. But if you're not concerned that it's the Providence Chichester anniversary on Wednesday you should be.

Whether you can be there or not is not the question I'm asking. But to be concerned for a local church, to be concerned for the hedge end anniversary next Saturday because it marks the existence and the goodness and the faithfulness of God to that people since last we met with them and rejoiced at all that the Lord had done for them.

We are bound together in the bundle of life and if we are those that only look to ourselves we shrivel and we die. We need to look beyond, we need to have that concern, that concern for the many places that have not heard the gospel.

[36 : 10] And that is not an inconsistency with our doctrinal position. It surely is because we have been favored by the grace of God in such a wonderful fashion that we are concerned for all that have not similarly been favored.

And our longing is that if it could please God that they might be brought into these things. They're not any worse than we were. We were not better than them.

Oh, then that God will cause there to be that extension even as his promise declares to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And these are marks, I say, of a church that's fearing the Lord. These are the things that we've got to look for. These are the things that concern me that as a pastor I might see in the church.

These are the things which gladden my heart. These are the things that keep me to a little company where there is a desire after the very marks of churches that are being edified and walking in the fear of the Lord.

[37 : 26] Now let us look and close with this a little at the part of the verse dealing with the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied.

and if you thought it was a bit radical to speak of it being a multiplying by the means of the advocacy, the paraclete, the presence and the operations of the Holy Spirit, then I would say to you that we don't preclude the comfort of the believer.

Those that walk in the fear of the Lord are those that know the comfort of the Holy Ghost. You never know anything of the comfort of the Holy Ghost except you walk in the fear of the Lord.

Again we are so confused at times in our thinking we want the comfort without the walking. And it's not big words of ready talkers nor dry doctrine will suffice.

It's broken hearts and tender walkers that are dear in Jesus' eyes. We want that which is the walking in the fear of the Lord and then there will be the comfort.

[38 : 38] If you want the comfort of assurance or you want the comfort of a felt interest in the Saviour's blood then you have got to go to Christ and seek. Never get the comfort by being indifferent to your need and indifferent to the gospel as it sounds for.

There is to be that seeking while he is to be found that calling upon his name while he is near. He that calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And the comfort comes I say to the Lord's people when they walk in the fear of the Lord. And there is a comfort of the Holy Ghost. Oh what a comfort it is.

He knows his business. If he is the comforter he knows how to comfort better than any pastor. There are pastors that have the name of being most able and tender and faithful pastors.

thank God for them. But there is nothing like the comfort of the Holy Ghost. He is the best of all pastors. He is the one that comes and he knows exactly what is wrong.

[39 : 49] And he is that one that can lift us up from the low place and he is that one that can come and strengthen us in our weakness. And he is that one that can ease the hurt when we have been brought to a wounded state.

And when we feel that no man careth for our soul. Who cares more for us than the one who has loved us with an everlasting love. And the comforter brings that love of God.

The love of God shared abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. And there is that comfort. There is peace. There is that peace which is the peace of sin forgiven.

He hath made peace through the blood of his cross. And we are brought by the spirit of God back when we are wandering from it. When we are thinking that it is a bit of grace and a bit of work we are brought to see it is all of grace.

And the spirit shows us that we have got nothing to contribute. For it is a finished work. It is all done. And we are brought to view Christ and to run with patience looking unto Jesus.

[40 : 55] That is the spirit's work. Oh blessed spirit of God that is the comforter that comes to us. We are so often reluctant even to admit our need and often unbelieving even to his very person and his work.

But he is the comforter. And those walking in the fear of the Lord they knew what it was to experience comfort. Churches knew what it was to be comforted.

They had been persecuted. They existed in the midst of a situation of persecution. They were given rest and in the rest they were being edified. Who was edified?

They were being edified by the word, the ministry of apostles. But who was behind the apostles and who was giving the word through the apostles? The apostles doctrine, spirit of God.

They were being nurtured in spiritual things. Joy and peace are the works of the spirit and there is that hope of things to come.

[42 : 01] You know how in Romans 15, 3 Paul prays that the God of peace, the God of hope might fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

That he may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. He's a powerful comforter. Well they were those that were being comforted because they were walking in the fear of the Lord and there is this multiplication.

You see that? They are being multiplied. They are being multiplied because the spirit of God was adding to them. God was adding to the church. Such as should be saved.

Adding in all the churches those that should be saved. And the spirit of God is about the work. It's the spirit's work to call a man from darkness to light.

But oh he is pleased to use the witness. They were scattered. They went forth. The spirit of God uses men. Our judges they went forth under the persecution he was using men and women in the way that they spoke in their everyday conversation.

[43 : 13] As he said the things that they had both feelingly come to experience as they told their story. Wherever there was an ear that was prepared to listen.

The spirit of God made that instrumental in the multiplying. It was a multiplying. And the preached word as it went forth the apostolic doctrine in demonstration of the spirit.

Not the oratory. Not the elements. Not the facility with words that these men had because few of them seemed to have great facility with words.

But they had the power of the spirit upon their utterance. By the spirit of God there was conviction wrought and there were conversions made even conversions like Saul of Tarsus.

Even such a man as that brought by the spirit of God to see himself as a sinner and to discover Jesus Christ as he said. And that's how multiplication takes place in the churches.

[44 : 15] By the spirit of God. Not by might. Not by power. But by my spirit saith the Lord. And that's a principle. Abiding. That's not just in the ninth of the acts and the thirty-first verse.

That's through the whole gospel age. That's to the end of time. To the end of the world. Till Christ comes again. That there will be that multiplying by the Holy Ghost.

And that he takes the witness by life and lip of his people. And he blesses the testimony in the preached gospel. And by the presence and the advocacy and the divine help of one that stands with his people.

There are those additions and there will be those additions to the end of time. When there is the walk of the churches in the fear of the Lord. There will be the felt comfort and the felt comfort of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of men and women.

He will use to his own glory and instrumentally to the accomplishing of eternal purposes. The glory will be God's and the great advantage will be ours.

[45 : 36] There will be the multiplication. You say, well, what do we know of multiplication? In that day, 5,000 in Jerusalem in Acts 2. Then the 3,000 in Jerusalem in Acts 2.

5,000 a chapter or so later and by the time you get to Acts 6, there is a whole multitude, the multitude of the disciples. This is truly multiplication.

But what about our day? Well, what about our day? The principle holds good in our day too. We are not seeing this multiplying. No, but this is the way that we will see the multiplying.

If there is any multiplying to be, it must be this way. It won't be any other way. It won't multiply those that are gracious men and women by any other way than by the work of the Spirit of God.

The danger is today that there are so many apparent shortcuts to multiplication, that if we do this, we will get people in. The ecumenical movement is supposed to be that which is the way to get people in.

[46 : 43] Get people into what? Get them into what? What will they receive when they get into this great agglomeration? No, we are talking of grace, we are talking of the gospel, we are talking of things of salvation, we are speaking of true religion more than notion.

That's wrought by the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost must do that. Whatever our witness and were we to spend every waking moment engaged in some effort that we might extend Christ's kingdom, it would not be extended so much as by one soul without the Spirit of God.

We need to know this. Editions are God's business. Well, what does it tell us? It tells us that in this day there are not the additions here in this land certainly.

There are not the additions that there were in Judea and in Galilee and in Samaria in these days of the apostles. Well, that's in God's prerogative too.

There are those generations in which he saves by many and there are those generations in which he seems to be saving but few. But the work is his work.

[48 : 03] The role of the church is the same whether it be a day when there are many seeking Christ coming Zion weeping and desiring that they might be found amongst God's people.

Whether it be in such a day as many are wending their way to Zion or whether it be in a day when there's but one or two and here another and there another which I judge is our day.

The day of small things is not to be despised. It's the same God. It's the same gospel. It's the same power. And by the work of the spirit there will be the multiplication still.

There are those still being raised up. We say we know more of division than multiplication. We know more of subtraction than addition. Leave the matters of mathematics aside.

We're not concerned with these things. We're concerned with God's purposes. The secret things that belong to God are not to be prided. The things that are revealed are to be given the utmost attention that our ransom powers are capable of giving them.

[49 : 18] That is that there be that building up and that walking in the fear of the Lord. And that crying to God that by spirit he will do as seemeth good in his sight.

And raises up men like a flock. Give us a people. that's the thing that's to concern us that we live godly, soberly, righteously in this present world.

That we're a prayerful people that our concern is that the gospel be testified to in this awful day of iniquity and when abomination is on every side conspicuous even in the professing church.

that we be true to the old gospel of redeeming love. That we are those that hold firm to these things. That we preach Christ and him crucified.

God by his spirit working will do what is good in his sight. He knows the appointed time. And when the appointed time comes for this one and another that one will be brought whether it's a Saul of Tarsus or whether it's a Lydia.

[50 : 27] who came so gently to know that her heart opened by the Lord so she became obedient to the things that were spoken by the apostle. God's at work.

His spirit is the same spirit. There won't be one more saved than God intends to save. There won't be one less saved either. May we have some rest because it may be that there is that tension in some of our hearts because we are concerned with the days.

It's a hard day. You've got to come to terms with it. And you've got to come to terms not on the terms of human wit and wisdom. You've got to come to the word of God and to the power of God's truth and seek it from the law and testament.

You may learn God's way. It's not a day to change the message. It's not a day to apologize for it either. It's a day to stand for it and to be earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

It's a day for us to hold fast to that which is good. It's a day for us to take our stand as the godly have taken the stand in generations past and to look to our lives that we might adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things and that our churches should walk in the fear of the Lord and that in the comfort of the Holy Spirit personally experience and in the advocacy of the Holy Spirit also we might know the additions, the multiplications.

[52 : 06] If it please God so to work then we shall see what our God is doing. Then we shall be able to say even so Father so it seemeth good in thy sight.

It's an important verse. It reveals the nature of true religion. It shows also the way that the churches are to be until the end of the gospel age.

It's as relevant at the end of the 20th century as it ever was in the midst of the first century. God give us to be those that receive the word.

May we be those good hearers and may we be those that are doers. The doing is to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and to continue and to be built up, to be edified and to know the working of grace, working in as brought to will and to do of God's good pleasure so that we are such in the churches as are walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost are being multiplied.

God bless his word to us. Amen.