

Energized for Mission - The Rocky Road to Peace

Acts 9:23-31; 2 Corinthians 11:24-33

There were a lot of possible themes for today's message. Strangely enough I gravitated toward the one that sounded like ice _____. It does also feel like the right _____ based on the text.

Consider what we have seen recently: _____ stoned, a great persecution, Christians _____, strange new believers, Saul ready to wreak havoc in Damascus, a dramatic _____, public preaching, violent opposition, narrow _____, disbelief in Jerusalem, Barnabas encourages, more persecution, another departure. But then we get verse 31:

"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up."

Peace?! Huh?! This doesn't look like peace. Yet, God's Word says the Church had PEACE. Not just for a point in time, but as an ongoing condition! Not only did they possess _____, but the Bible also says the Church was being _____ up! How could that be when every circumstance seemed to indicate it was being torn apart?

The second half of the verse gives us some clues:

"And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied."

We can have peace in the midst of storms and between storms **walking in the _____ of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit**. The fear of the Lord may best be understood by its opposite: **the fear of _____**.

The fear of man is the fear of what humans can and might do to _____ us physically, socially, emotionally, financially, and more. When circumstances threaten us in these ways, it becomes an opportunity to help us fear, love, and _____ in HIM above all else. (Matthew 10:28)

This isn't about being _____ of God, but being more _____ about losing him than anything else. It's about appreciating him and what HE does for us more than anyone or anything else. It's a preoccupation with what HE _____ from us instead of with what everything else desires from us.

Having all the _____ offers doesn't bring peace. Only _____ can. Losing everything can't rob us of it with Christ. But tough times can show us what's most durable and most important: *the rocky road to peace*.

That's when the _____ of the Holy Spirit comes in. He _____ us what Jesus did. He reminds us we are loved. He reminds us Jesus is still alive. He reminds us we are _____. He reminds us of the infinite promises of God in Christ that are worth far more than anything else this world has to offer.

"Walking in" these two realities is an ongoing, _____ discipline that guards us against a casual complacency AND a legalistic, religious based anxiety and paranoia. It is also what _____ the Church.

How have tough times helped you realize who/what matters most?

How is God leading you to more faithfully walk in the fear of the Lord?

How is God leading you to walk more consistently in the comfort of the Holy Spirit?

How is God leading you to more peaceful circumstances or more peace within chaotic circumstances?

What are you going to DO in response to what Christ has DONE?