

Then the Churches Had Rest

by Eli Brayley

Eli Brayley's sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual edification during times of rest for the Church, warning against complacency and urging a return to the fear of God.

Scripture: Acts 9:31, Philippians 4:9, 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Hebrews 12:12, Jude 1:20, Revelation 3:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Living"

Description

Eli Brayley preaches on the transformation of Saul of Tarsus, later known as the apostle Paul, and its impact on the early Church, leading to a time of rest and edification among the believers. Drawing parallels to the modern Western Church, he emphasizes the importance of utilizing times of peace to grow in faith, love, and holiness, warning against the dangers of spiritual degeneracy in the absence of persecution. The message calls for a return to the fear of God, walking in holiness, and seeking the comfort of the Holy Spirit to avoid judgment and spiritual complacency.

Transcript

"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea 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." - Acts 9:31

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the man who violently persecuted the Body of Christ (throwing them in prison and overseeing their death sentences), Saul of Tarsus, was miraculously apprehended and changed by an encounter with the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, as recorded in the ninth chapter. Saul then began to preach and teach in various cities, and later was introduced to the twelve apostles in Jerusalem, whom he spent much time with "coming in and going out" as we see in verse 28.

We can talk much about the result of this transformation in Saul's life, but what of the implications this conversion had on the corporate Body of Christ at that time? We come to our text in the 31st verse: "Then had the churches rest..." And rest they had indeed, though not for long; until the fires of persecution were re-kindled in chapter 12, when king Herod killed James the brother of John by the sword.

It is interesting to note, in verse 31, the advantage which accompanies this rest that the Church experiences. We see that the believers were edified. Meaning, they took that opportune time of rest to grow in faith and love with one another (2 Thessalonians 1:3), to be built up as Christians (Jude 1:20), to strengthen that which was weak (Hebrews 12:12), to practise those things which they have learned (Philippians 4:9), etc. The key to this verse is the following line: "...walking in the fear of the Lord, and in

the comfort of the Holy Ghost..." The result of all this was the multiplication of those being saved.

We can draw a brief parallel between the circumstance of the early Church and the circumstance of the western Church today. Mainly, that we, like those believers in Judea, Samaria and Galilee, are experiencing a time of rest from persecution, whereby we may worship the Lord in peace and safety. The question to ask is: are we also being edified?

There are only two possible outcomes to rest. The first is edification, the second, degeneracy. One stems from the fear of God, the other from apathetic irreverence. One results in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, the other in anxiety and malcontentment. One harvests converts, the other yields nothing. It is imperative we know which outcome is the result of our present time of rest: edification or degeneracy?

I believe the answer is quite obvious. This is a warning to all who are reading, that the western Church is headed for judgment unless we repent and come back to the fear of God, walking in holiness, earnest and love. We need desperately the Comforter, the blessed Holy Spirit. We need immediately to do as the Bible instructs for all those who stray from the straight path.

"I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you." (Revelation 3:1-3)

Take heed to the Word of God!

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