

**CHAPEL ON THE HILL**  
 Shrewsbury, Massachusetts  
[www.cothma.org](http://www.cothma.org)

<b>Date:</b>	April 6, 2008	<b>Pastor:</b>	Jeff Gauvin
<b>Message Title:</b>	Acts 9:31 - That Fearsome, Comforting Power that Increases the Church		

**Week's Message**

Message	Bible Reference Passage
<p>Continuing on in our study on the fear of the Lord, today I really want to get at a practical application as to how the fear of the Lord impacts the church. We have already seen that where a chasm of reverence has been carved deep in our souls, there will be a channel for joy and peace to flow strong and sure. But without a proper fear and trembling happy feelings do not flow strong; they, in fact, spread thin and create a boggy swamp and stagnate. As the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, I think we can also say the fear of the Lord is where peace and joy begin. We don't know real peace until we find our peace with the Almighty and Holy God whom we have offended. And as Augustine said, we are restless until we find our rest in Thee.</p> <p>Next week I want to cover how we grow in this fear of the Lord. But today I want to tell you a practical reason why we have spent 5 sermons on this topic, and plan to spend one more.</p>	
<p>There is a kind of trembling and excitement that any church can manufacture. We can give alter calls with background music to stir the emotions; I believe this would be a form of manipulation. The other week I merely asked if anyone prayed earlier in the service for God's salvation in Jesus. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit is not isolated to the end of the sermon to move a person's heart.</p> <p>I did it that way because there is a kind of moving of our spirit that has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. I have to fight not to cry at the end of the movie - <i>Little Mermaid</i>. Some of us are just emotional and can be moved by any breeze that comes by. That's not really good or bad. What's bad is when we think it is the Holy Spirit when it is merely the stirring of our emotions. <b>James 2:19</b>. Even demons are capable of an emotional response and a rational belief in God. King Herod enjoyed listening to John the Baptist. <b>Mark 6:20</b>. Good feelings are not the best evidence that you are a Christian. You can feel really good right now because you took some opium before church. Or to put it another way, a sense of comfort and peace because you took the time to watch a sunset does not mean you are okay with God and your sins have been forgiven.</p> <p>If you can't rely on your emotions, what else is there? Well there is the power of Jesus Christ and Him crucified for sinners; the power of the gospel. Let's read Acts 9:1-31.</p>	
<p><b>Context</b> – Judea is the southern region, almost parallel to the dead sea; Samaria is right above it, parallel with the Jordan river; and</p>	

<p>Galilee is above Samaria, parallel with the Sea of Galilee. Paul was sent way North, by boat, to Tarsus. This verse is really a summary and closure to one of many sections in the book of Acts. Starting with the next verse we are given the ministry of Peter to the gentiles.</p>	
<p><b>What is this peace? Peace</b> - This word in the greek is ειρηνη. So what is this peace? It is a rest in the midst of strife; like the eye of a hurricane, which has no wind and no rain and a blue sky. But make no mistake there is a swirling vortex of trouble surrounding you.</p> <p>The word right before peace is ‘to have’. It is in what is called the imperfect tense, which means a continual sustained action. They didn’t just all of a sudden have peace when Paul left, but they kept having peace. Also in this verse we read “<b>Going on</b>” or <b>walking</b> – The word is πορευω. It means to pursue or continue a journey one has already entered. So the point of this verse is to say that the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit had continued.</p>	<p><i>Acts 9:31</i></p>
<p>So my next logical question is - <b>Where did this peace, fear and comfort begin?</b> - While God certainly can make peace fall out of the sky, I believe most of the time God causes our minds to be consumed with real things that bring peace about. The disciples are in the midst of some awesome occurrences. Since verse 31 is a summary verse I’m inclined to think the reason why the church (or churches) had peace and were continuing to be built up had something to do with what we just read. So how is it they were being built up?</p>	
<p><b>1. There was an awesome message</b>, a teaching that was internally building up the Church. Receiving and walking by faith in the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified builds up the church. And look at this vicious Saul, in Damascus (<b>verse 22</b>); he was proving that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. That word for proving is only used 6 times. It is a very descriptive word; literally it means to knit together. Figuratively it means to bring thoughts and ideas together to make connections. What was Paul’s connection? That Jesus was the long awaited Messiah? How is he to do that, with a Torah in front of Him? So after Paul nearly escapes death in Damascus, he goes on to Jerusalem and look what he does. <b>Vs. 28</b>. The message that Christ has come, not to save us from Roman tyranny, but to save us from our sins, was spreading. And it was spreading through reasoned preaching through the scriptures. And the text says literally in <b>verse 28</b> that Paul was ‘going in and going out’. And the same word is used in <b>verse 31</b>, where it says the church was going on in the fear of the Lord. Once again I believe this</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Colossians 2:6</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Colossians 2:2</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Acts 17:1-2</i></p>



**CHAPEL ON THE HILL**  
 Shrewsbury, Massachusetts  
[www.cothma.org](http://www.cothma.org)

<p>bible study and the way the Lord’s supper is done; the way we evangelize and do mission, what our sign says outside, and what our vision is.</p> <p>But notice we also see here the fear of the Lord AND the comfort of the Holy Spirit. They are both there. And they are not at odds with each other. They are not enemies; they are friends. This brings us back to the beginning of the sermon. This is not a contrived “give yourself a hug” kind of feel good stuff here. The comfort comes from the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>We must not settle for a weak foundation of emotional tricks and gimmicks.</p> <p>Let me put it this way—don’t start with how you feel and don’t end there either. If you don’t feel good, strain harder to see His cross. If you feel good, don’t take your eyes off His cross as if you’ve arrived. If your eyes are full of tears because of your sin, or some pain, or depression, don’t stop clearing them to have another look at His cross. If it is tears of joy you have, and there are so many that your eyes are about to be cried out of your head, let the last thing they see be Jesus Christ and Him crucified.</p>	
<p>If the devil has an opportunity to attack, his goal is not to make us feel badly about things. His goal is to blind our vision of Christ (<b>2 Cor. 4:3-4</b>). And the devil will use good and bad feelings to get this job done.</p>	
<p>When the church wakes up to understand the power it has been given, that it needs no psychological marketing tricks, that it is the power of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, then God moves. To be sure a church can increase without the fear of the Lord just as a circus can draw a crowd. But where the comfort and peace is contrived, and God is irreverently portrayed as our homeboy or buddy, the comfort and peace will not run deep either. And when the terrors of this world break in, when the sting of death comes after your family, the waters of a shallow joy will dry up quickly.</p> <p>But when the greater terror of the Lord, with all the force of eternity has rattled your heart, and you have seen your black sin in the light of His beautiful face, and you have miraculously come out clean, forgiven, and powerfully changed through the blood of this same terrifying God, then you have a river of joy that will endure any circumstance. And the church will increase.</p>	

*Thank you and have a blessed week.*  
**Join us every Sunday morning at 10:15am | Have a prayer request? Send it to us online.**