

(Message #8 of **The Church: A Divine Design**)

The Possession of the Church

Acts 9:31

This verse is dealing with the time immediately following the conversion of Paul. He is no longer persecuting the church. He is now preaching the gospel and seeking to win souls for the glory of God. This is a simple statement regarding the state of the church at that time, but it reveals great truth about what every church should possess.

It is often said, there are three things essential to business success - location, location, and location. I believe there is a key for successful churches - location, location, location. That location is "smack dab" in the middle of where we are!

Now, I know that we don't have access to the masses like some churches, but you are missing the point. The church is not the building; we are the church. The location of our hearts determines our success! If our hearts are located in the center of God's will, we are in a prime location. I want us to see, with an open heart, what great churches possess. As we continue our study on the church, I want to consider this verse and the **elements** of great churches as we think on: **The Possession of the Church**.

I. An Atmosphere of Peace – **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.** In the beginning of the chapter we find Saul, the great persecutor, has been converted. This must have had an impact on the persecution of the churches. Our text reveals that the churches then had **rest**. The word **rest** implies "*a sense of peace and prosperity.*" It was a time of great opportunity for them.

- Now, I have never experienced persecution for coming to church. But, an atmosphere of peace requires more than an absence of persecution. Many churches face no real conflict outwardly, but are in turmoil inwardly. A great church, one that is prosperous for Jesus, must possess peace and harmony within. Unity is found in an atmosphere of peace.
- Great churches are united in love, worship, and a vision for the future. We must remain committed to an atmosphere of peace. Most folks don't enjoy conflict; there is something wrong if they do! We must have peace if we are to prosper. The early churches success was greatly impacted by the unity of its members. Where peace abounds churches prosper!

II. An Affection for People – The churches found rest and **were edified**. Once an atmosphere of peace is established, edification can begin. The word **edify** refers to a "house builder". The church is a place for building, not tearing down. Great churches understand the process of edification.

- We as believers are called upon to edify each other. [Ep.4:12 – For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. This is achieved through an earnest affection for each other. Things may not always go your way, but that is no reason not to love the brethren.](#) We do the church, nor the Lord, any good by tearing down a brother in Christ.

- On occasion, I hear things that were spoken in public about church members, by church members, in a negative way. Hey, statements like that **do not edify** the church! Great churches have affection for people. We must love and encourage, not tear down and destroy!

I. An Atmosphere of Peace

II. An Affection for People

III. An Attitude of Purity – [They walked in fear of the Lord.](#) This is a way of life, not something reserved for Sunday. A great church will possess a reverent fear of the Lord, from the pulpit to the back pew. I need that attitude; you need that attitude.

- I want everything I do to be pleasing unto the Lord. He is the source of our strength and the sustainer of our souls. [II Cor. 7:1 – Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.](#) He must be foremost in our lives. An attitude of purity must become part of our daily routine.

- There is little fear of God in our day. People live as they please, never considering whether their actions honor God. Sadly, this is becoming increasingly evident in the church. Great churches possess an attitude of purity.

IV. An Acceptance of Power – They not only walked in fear, but in [comfort of the Holy Ghost.](#) There is more to comfort than mere consolation. In this context, it means “*to call near, a summons for help.*”

- I realize that without the power of the Spirit our churches will accomplish little for the Lord. It is good to realize that, but we must take it a step further. We must accept the Spirit’s power and submit ourselves to His will. It is one thing to know something, but quite different to live it!

- The modern church has got this thing of “worship” down to a science. We have modern equipment, well organized choirs, thoroughly studied messages, but often the Holy Spirit isn’t given place in the agenda. I had rather hear an average singer, or a preacher with a 9th grade education, who have a touch of God on them than the 1st Tabernacle Choir or Dr. Somebody!

- In our constant search for perfection we have lost the power. A great church will accept the power and authority of the Spirit and submit itself to that power. I am hungry for the Spirit to completely saturate our services! We need a great move of God's Spirit in our day. We could experience real revival then!

I. An Atmosphere of Peace

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III. An Attitude of Purity

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V. An Addition of People – These churches were multiplied. I believe they regularly experienced souls being saved instead of rarely. We are of the mindset that if 1 or 2 are saved in a year, we are productive. I am not making light of those; I thank God for them, but I am in no way satisfied with it. I serve a mighty God who is capable of mighty things.

- He is not where the problem lies. I know that we could see more souls saved than we do. I want Fellowship to be that kind of church. It should be the desire of each of us to see folks born into the family of God.
- What makes the difference? This is directly related to the power of the Holy Spirit. Our churches don't have the convicting power they used to have! The Spirit used to be so real that a lost man couldn't stand it in the church. A great church sees souls saved.

I spoke of location in the introduction. I wonder where your heart is located today. Is it in the right location to see great things? We are the church. A great church is decided by its members. Do you want us to be a great church for Jesus?

There are 3 kinds of people - those who make things happen; those who watch things happen; and those who wonder what happened. Do you want to make things happen? Won't you come and ask the Lord to help us?