

THE CHURCH

The Church

Peace

Acts 9:26-31

Week of January 9, 2022

Before Connect Group

- Acts 9:26-31
 - Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>
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And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Acts 9:26-31, ESV

Sermon Notes

No organization can give you the peace you need. And when you truly find your peace in Christ, no organization can threaten it.

A term that I have heard from the earliest days of my ministry is “church growth”. I have been to conferences who have focused all of their programming on nothing other than Church growth. Since becoming the Lead Pastor here at SCC I have taken teams to conferences who have invested in us to help us organize our church in ways that would promote Church Growth.

Church growth is something that many churches, including ours, in 2022 are going to be talking about. Why, because many churches in our country are running half of the amount of people in worship than they were before 2020. A lot of churches have shut their doors because they were already in strenuous financial situation before entering 2020. Others are beginning to downsize and rethink what their church has to look like in this new norm. And many, including ours, are preparing for that hard conversation because the resources are slowly dwindling away and the conversation turns toward “how can we grow the church?”

As this challenge is on the table in front of us this year, I wanted to make sure we were not just running out to the next best organizational model, but rather, we are truly turning into Scripture to have this conversation. Over the next several weeks (Before we jump back into Ephesians, Lord Willing) we are going to focus our attention here on this idea of the Church.

- When we read this passage, we don't immediately think about the idea of Church growth. We have a very culturally influenced idea of what Church actually is.
- We have a hard time thinking about “church” without thinking of the modern structure and organization. This series is not going to be a time for us to critique the modern church structure. There will be some implications of that, but the main focus of this is for you and me to center ourselves on the Biblical idea and growth model for the Church.
- When we set out to look for a “church,” we are often working from a rubric that is not found in Scripture, but is found in the comparison set out in our society.
- We will begin with looking for a church on a punch list of what the church “does”, rather than who the church “is.”
- This text is about church growth. If you were to simplify this verse into the most basic form of its sentence, it would read “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria multiplied.”
- This Peace, Being Built Up, Walking in fear of the Lord, and Comfort of the Holy Spirit - are the first century commentary on its “church growth” model.
- These are the things the church experienced/prioritized and it saw true multiplication.
- That word “multiply” can't get caught in the debate of meanings. If it would have said “grew”, we would debate whether that meant in number or in strength.
- In this text however, the author is communicating what led to the churches multiplication in numbers. But it's possible we don't see this as church growth today because the Author of Acts was delinquent in providing a catchy title.
- Maybe we could suggest that rather than “Saul in Jerusalem”, this section be titled: “Four pillars for church growth” or “The Four principles of a growing church”
- Each of these statements about the church in this verse build upon one another. “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and this led to their being built up, which in turn, caused them to walk in the fear of the Lord and experience

the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, the church multiplied.

- So the first of these statements, peace, is an important foundation.

The Peace of the Gospel In You

- We are often so caught up in finding a church that has all the things that we think we are looking for, that we forget that the “church” begins with the Gospel in our own hearts.
- Peace in our own hearts.
- Peace in your own heart can only be found in the love of Jesus Christ.
- For many, this is the starting place you have really needed in order to find a true church home.
- Some who go from church to church to church are those who asking the “church” to give them something they refuse to accept True Peace.
- Your heart is prone to Chaos and you do not have the skill or understanding to calm it.
- There are many “churches” in our culture who have claimed that they are not a “church”, they are a movement. I think this is probably accurate. However, many are buying into this because it is what we need without actually surrendering to Christ.
- We trade true faith in Christ and the true Peace of the Gospel for some social aphrodisiac for our soul. We calm the chaos in our hearts (temporarily) with the expense of goodwill through the movement that has begun in a community.
- However, when the Chaos of our hearts is no longer appeased, we will claim that this Church is no longer “doing the work of Christ” and will be on the search for something new and something fresh to pierce our broken and Peaceless hearts.
- We become addicted to the high we get from the Work of Christ rather than surrendering all to Him. I cannot think of a better example than the counseling that I often experience.
- Story about many who come to me for counseling. They want the tools and the wisdom so they can try to fix their marriage on their own, but they do not realize that all of these tools cannot replace the peace and forgiveness that is found in Christ alone.
- So they will go from place to place to place trying to find the next great idea all while claiming the other counselors became ineffective.
- I am weary when a couple comes to me and says “no one else has been able to help us, but we were told you are a great counselor and that you can help us.”
- And this is the way many of us approach the Church today. We want all the things the church has to offer, but then are left wondering why we are not comforted.
- I want to be very clear... No organization can give you the peace you need. And when you truly find your peace in Christ, No organization can threaten it. You, and those who have found peace also, Become The Church.
- This is what I believe Paul is suggesting in Ephesians which we all know so well...
- *Ephesians 2:14-22 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

He is our peace...

- *Hebrews 10:11-14* And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

He preached peace...

- *Acts 2:37-41* Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
- Repent, be baptized, receive forgiveness, and gift of Holy Spirit.
- The recipe for the Gospel Peace in your heart!

... Then He Builds Up The Church

- So why do we need the Church?
- This is a great question... However, it is a question that is born out of those who have grown to expect from the Church what only Christ can give.
- It is important to remember that the Church is not Christ, but Scripture tells us that Christ is the Head of the Church.

The Peace of the Gospel in the Church.

- The Peace in the fellowship of believers vs. The Chaos of the World.
- In our last point, I had made the claim that your heart is filled with Chaos and there is nothing you can do about it. Only Christ can create everlasting Peace in your heart through your surrender to Him.
- So here, my claim would be that there is Chaos in the world around us. Immense troubling and threatening chaos and the Church is the only beacon of peace within it.
- A great and fearful threat that is overwhelmed by the Gospel and the Church has Peace.
- So often we go on a hunt for a Church who has similar views as we do on the current events around us.
- How many people do you hear who come home from visiting a church and say... That Church has a Peace in the midst of Chaos. It is so clear to us that the Gospel has saturated the Praise and singing, it has saturated the preaching and teaching, it has saturated the fellowship. These things are not unimportant, but they are not in this simplistic growth model of Acts 9:31
- Until we take the lead from this Church in Acts and prioritize the true Peace of the Gospel in our hearts and in our communities, we may never experience true church growth. And will never experience personal growth and contentment.
- The things the church "does" are very important, as they become the outflow of Gospel saturated believers.

What are you searching for this morning? Have you found it? How are we going to Grow Switzerland Community Church in 2022?

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- Where do we look for peace in our daily lives? How does this compare with the peace that comes from Jesus Christ?
- What does it mean to have peace in our hearts? How does abiding in Christ allow for the peace of Christ to set in our hearts?
- What is the relationship between the Gospel and peace, between the salvation of Jesus Christ and the peace in our lives both now and eternally?
- Describe what is meant by our desiring chaos and seeking to create chaos in order to find meaning. Where do you see yourself doing this in your life?
- What metric do we tend to judge churches by as to whether or not they are doing the will of God? How do these compare with the standards of the world? Of the word of God?
- What changes in our life when we understand that we ARE the church we do not GO TO church? Why is this distinction important?

Challenge For The Week

For many of us, we seek the peace of God in the arms of programs, the next best things, and a consumeristic mindset that we are recipients of the services of the church rather than being the church as the incarnate presence of God in the world. While each time we move, change, or switch churches will serve an immediate need, we will never truly thrive in the peace of God made manifest in our lives.

- Spend some time in prayerful contemplation asking the Lord to reveal to you the places where you have fallen in to this notion that the church is present to search you rather than to glorify God.
- Christ will be magnified throughout all the world and every knee will bow to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Those in Him will find an eternity of sharing in the presence of God. Consider in prayerful contemplation one person you could pray for this week who has not submitted their lives to Jesus Christ.

