

The Vibrant Church

Acts 9:31-43

The stage is set in Acts for the gospel to go to the gentiles. Before that happens Luke tells us that the church is vibrant and strong.

He gives us five characteristics of a healthy church. A healthy, vibrant church is:

United

Despite existing in three very different regions (Judea, Galilee, Samaria) Luke describes these many churches as 'the church.' The church was one. Healthy churches will have a gracious hearted attitude to other churches.

But Luke also says the church enjoyed 'peace'. This was more than an absence of persecution. Healthy churches have a unity around the vision of seeing the good news of Jesus spread.

Strengthened

Luke says the church was 'being built up.' The leaders were teaching the church and it was growing in strength as a result. That is the task of leaders. But we cannot hand over all the responsibility for our individual growth to others. A healthy church will be one where its members are self-feeders: feeding on the word of God, and on Christ, and being built up by him.

Bold but Trembling

Luke says that the church was 'walking in the fear of the Lord.' Churches and Christians can have a misplaced fear: they fear man, rather than God. That kind of fear makes us timid. But when we fear God rather than man it makes us bold – because we know whose opinion really matters.

But it is a boldness marked by reverence. It does not trivialize God. This fear of God affects the way you live: it makes a church bold about spreading the gospel. It will be a worshipping church, a praying church, and a church growing in godliness.

Spurred On

Luke says the church was 'walking... in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.' Jesus did not send the Spirit to give us a comfortable life, but to help us, encourage us and spur us on, to complete the task he has given us to do: to take the gospel into the world in word and deed.

Multiplying

The church multiplied through the proclamation of the gospel. It is going deeper and deeper into gentile areas. But two things helped lay the ground-work for this multiplication: the miracles of healing that showed Jesus was still at work; and the good works of someone like Tabitha.

We should not hesitate to pray for one another when we are sick. And a healthy church will be one where our skills and resources are being used to multiply good works for the good of others.