

COMFORT AND FEAR

I have a bit of a long-running competition with a neighbour about the amount of leaves that fall in his drive compared with ours. This year, he's really stretched out an early lead, as I've seen him sweeping up twice already! All we've had drop are various things that squirrels throw at us when we're leaving the house. It's so amazing that, despite knowing what might happen at certain times of year, things are never the same twice.

In summer, most of us long for those few days of sun and the associated opportunity to grab a deckchair and a book (or whatever you like). This summer, however, in amongst those moments have been times of change and loss that felt a lot more like autumn and winter than summer. It says in Acts 9.31: "So the Church throughout all Burnage and Manchester and the UK 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." Well, maybe not quite like that, but close.

You'll note I made some subtle changes in geography! The peace felt by the Church in Acts came after a time of great persecution and trial. I don't want to link us and the young Church too heavily as the differences are vast. However, I do believe that as a church, we are moving from a place where we were perhaps used to finding our own comfort to a time when we have no other choice but to seek the comfort of the Spirit. I also believe that we do that in part because of an increasing "fear of the Lord". I don't mean that we gather on a Sunday and huddle in a corner shaking, too scared to venture out, but I do think that God's urging us forward is felt more widely and taken more seriously.

So let us pray more fervently that God would lead us as a church to multiply, knowing peace and living in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

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