



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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JUMP START #287

Acts 24:25- “ But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, ‘go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.’”

The apostle Paul had been arrested for preaching Jesus Christ. The Jewish hierarchy followed and harassed Paul most of his Christian life. This arrest would begin a long process in which the apostle would stand before different governors, kings, and eventually Caesar himself. He would be in and out of prison and finally shipped off to Rome.

Our passage finds Paul standing before Felix, the appointed governor. I find it interesting what Paul preached about. Our text tells us three things: righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. Those are all personal topics. They involve a look within. The apostles were charged with preaching the gospel. The gospel included our relationship and our responsibility towards God. I doubt that Felix expected those topics to be the discussion of the day. What is refreshing to see that Paul didn't discuss wars, world hunger, politics and all the things that one might anticipate. He didn't even talk about the grand differences between the Jews and the Christians. His words were personal. At the end of the day, this Roman official, was a man, a man like Paul. At the end of the day he needed what all men need, and that is the Savior Jesus Christ.

That is a good lesson for us to remember. The position that one holds does not change his status with God. The boss, the school teacher, the cop, the attorney, the doctor, the governor, the CEO, the senator, the president, at the end of the day all need the same thing that you and I need, and that is to stand right before God, to walk humbly in his ways and to be subject to his will. We are the same in that way.

Paul talked about three things:

Righteousness. This is a legal word, and it means to be right, or not guilty. It is God who makes us right. Wrong people, or guilty people can be right by the blood of Jesus Christ. Righteousness is not just a one time event, it is a way of life. God's people are to walk in righteous ways or “right ways.” There are right ways and wrong ways about everything in life.

(OVER)

There is a right way to be a spouse and a wrong way. There is a right way to parenting and a wrong way. There is a right attitude to have in life and a wrong attitude. Righteous ways always belong to the Lord. Paul was talking to a low ranking member of the Roman political system that was heaped in corruption, murders, and indecencies. Doing right and being right most likely didn't cross the radar of Felix very often. He operated upon what pleased Caesar and what would advance his career—not unlike what a lot of folks do today. Doing the right thing means a person has a moral compass that is pointing to God. They are thinking about what words they are going to say and what effect their decisions will have. Righteousness is something we all need to think about.

Self-Control- This is listed as one of the virtues in 2 Peter. Flipping the word around tells us what this means, it is the control of self. Often, folks act as if they are on a runaway train and they can't help the anger or the explosive words or the passion that builds up in them. Under control. Language under control. Thoughts under control. Desires and passions under control. Attitudes under control. Self control is linked and connected to righteousness. The righteous person wants to be under control. He knows when he is not, he is no longer righteous. Losing his temper and throwing a fit is not very righteous. Letting lust rule your heart is not right. Controlled by self, which is controlled by Christ. How do you get under control? First, you can't just let things happen. You must think. You must fill your heart with Christ. Ever notice a Nascar race when a car is spinning out of control? The driver turns the steering wheel a certain way and holds it there and then he turns it very fast the other way and in an instant the car quits spinning, often avoiding hitting the wall. Do you see a lesson there? Something happens and your attitude, your language is spinning out of control. You grab the wheel of your heart and turn it and you bring it back around. Prayer helps. Looking at Jesus in the gospels is a great help. Under control. Great lesson for Felix. Great lesson for us.

The judgment to come- We will be judged by God. This world will end. Christ will gather the dead. The books will be opened. Those whose names are found in the book of life will enter heaven, all others will be cast out. This is serious. We are accountable. We can't live and act and say things without consequences. Our actions point us to Heaven or Hell.

Three very serious and very personal topics. Before our verse ends we are told that Felix became frightened. He should have. It ought to frightened us as well. Are you right with God? Is your heart under control? Are you ready to stand before God and be judged? Serious questions. These questions cross all generations. I must think about this as well as Felix had to. He got scared and sent Paul away. Today, about the only place we will hear about these topics is in church. And many of us would not return the next week if the preacher talked about these things. These topics won't make us laugh. We don't leave thinking what an amazing place. If we listen, these things stun us. They make us reflect. They make us see massive areas that we need help with. They either bring us to God, or make us run away. But run all you want, they won't go away and some day you'll be faced with these. God wants to know why you are not righteous, why you are not under control, and why you are not ready for the judgment?

Paul did well. He spoke what all needed to hear, even today. Righteousness, self-control, and the judgment. Chew on those today. Give it some thought. Adjust. Make changes. Don't run from God but run to him. We need help. We need him.

