



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 # 317

Ezra 7:10- “for Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

Ezra is often a forgotten character in the Bible. He lived in Babylon while the children of Israel were in captivity. In about 458 B.C., Ezra led a group of Israelites back to their homeland of Jerusalem. When he got there, he saw that the Jews that were already there were not following the laws that God had given his people. Ezra became upset and wanted to fix these wrong doings.

Our verse shows three things that Ezra did to help the children of Israel:

First, he prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord. He told himself that he was going to follow what God wanted him to do. He first established in his heart that he would follow all the commandments and laws of God. Have you ever set your heart on something? Normally when you do that, you will have great determination to do whatever it is you set your heart on. You don't give up until you've accomplished your goal. When your heart is set on a goal, victory is sweeter and failure is more painful. You give all your blood, sweat, tears, passion and work to the goal. Ezra wanted to seek the laws of the Lord. He set his heart to it.

Second, Ezra did it. He set his heart on a goal and then went out and tried to accomplish his goal. How many of us will think of a great idea, but when it comes to actually executing the plan, it rarely happens. Or we tell ourselves we are going to do one thing, but we end up doing another. Diets seem to be that way. You tell yourself that you will start tomorrow. But when tomorrow comes, you are eating the same way you did before. Ezra not only set his heart on something, but he did it.

Third, Ezra taught the people. He didn't just plan it and do it, but he made sure others were doing it as well. He made sure to not only make sure he was living how God wanted him to live, but he made sure that everyone else around him was too.

I think all of us can apply the three simple things in our lives. Have we set our hearts on following the commandments that God has given us? Have we made it our goal? Once we set our hearts on God, are we actually doing it? Are we giving everything we have to God? Are we demonstrating our obedience and love to God by actually following through with our plan? And are we teaching others along the way?

There's a saying “we might be the only Bible a person will ever read.” That's a scary thought. To know that by simply setting my heart on God and acting how God wants me to act, I can teach someone about God at the same time.

Look inside your heart. What have you set your heart on? If your heart is on God, are you acting like God wants you to act? And lastly, when someone sees you, can they see someone who wants to follow God and his commandments? Or do they see someone who has no purpose, no direction?

Set your heart on God. Do what God wants you to do. Teach others God by what you do and how you act.

Roger Shouse

Some additional thoughts:

Monday- Deut. 5:29

Tuesday- 1 Sam. 16:7

Wednesday- 2 Chron. 12:13,14

Thursday- Psalm 51:10

Friday- Matt. 5:8

Saturday- Psalm 57:7