



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)

July 10, 2011

JUMP START #353

Ezekiel 34:6- *“But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman’s hand.”*

We looked at this verse last week and talked about the idea of a sentry looking over the walls of the city. While everyone is busy down below going about life, there is a sense of security because the sentry, or watchman, is at his post. When he sees advancing armies, he blows the trumpet, much like a tornado siren alerts us today. The city stops what it is doing. Men grab weapons and race to the walls. Women grab children and run for cover. An invasion is turned because the watchman warned the city of coming danger. Great concept and principle for us spiritually.

Last week, we considered the role of dads in the home. He is the watchman of the family. He warns and protects the family.

Today, we look at another set of watchmen. These watch over the congregation or church. These are elders or bishops. The word for bishop is “overseer”- the idea of the watchman. Elders, bishops, pastors or shepherds are the same group of people in the N.T. 1 Peter 5 and Acts 20 uses a combination of these words within the same sentences to define the roles and work of these men. God’s shepherds today look over the church where they are members. They do not oversee or are involved in other churches. There is not a pyramid organizational structure with levels and levels of organization. Not in God’s church. Not in the Bible. Each church in the N.T. is independent. Money does not flow to a higher organization. There is no board above a local congregation. There are no delegates, or annual council meetings. I know for some of our readers this may seem very strange. Look at Phil. 1:1 or Acts 20:28-30. The modern church has structured itself after the business model and not the N.T. Too many have given up on God’s plan of things.

Our shepherds today are responsible for helping us grow and protecting us. They are watchmen upon the walls. Just as a shepherd watching over a group of sheep in the hills of Judea, that’s what God’s shepherds do today. The old shepherd would notice if the sheep were eating or not. He’d look at them and see if some are looking sickly or seemed to be troubled. He knew that lurking in the shadows were predators who would love to eat the sheep. David, when he approached King Saul about fighting Goliath, told of killing a lion and a bear. David was not on a hunting trip when that happened. He was a shepherd, a watchman. The lion came near and David sprang into action and killed it. That’s what watchman do.

God's shepherds today, looking over the church, must be sharp. There is a lot of funny stuff being put out in books these days. Some are claiming that Hell doesn't exist. Others are claiming they died and went to Heaven for a while and somehow came back. I guess to write a book and make millions. Others are claiming that there is no Heaven. Some are saying that the world ends tomorrow. Lots of ideas that are not true to the Scriptures. Watchmen must recognize this stuff. They must be willing to blow the trumpet. Error often comes wrapped in a pretty package and seems quite innocent.

Satan wants the church. He wants to split it, divide it, and destroy it. He'll use false teaching. He'll use discouragement. He'll use friction among the members. He'll use people. He doesn't play by the rules and he doesn't care. Watchmen are ready. They are at the walls and have trumpets in their hand. There is a sense of security when Godly men are watching God's church. They want it to survive. They want it to thrive. They want it to make an impact in this generation.

Some of the greatest threats today come from members. Members who have not studied nor grown in the word of God as they should. They don't understand things so they don't know why the church can't engage in business, why it can't have a circus, why it can't be like an amusement park. They want these things and the watchmen must remind them and teach them the ways of God. The kingdom of God is not like the kingdoms of the earth. God's church is a spiritual haven. Its purpose is to praise God and get people ready for Heaven.

Watchmen are important. Without them we can't go about our business. Fear of what might happen cripples us. Watchmen set us at ease.

God bless our watchmen, the shepherds, elders of the church. They do a wonderful work of keeping us together, keeping us settled down, and keeping us safe. We tend to wander off to places that are dangerous. They bring us back. We tend to be careless. They are careful. We tend to fuss. They calm us down. What a powerful work they do for us.

Roger Shouse

Some additional thoughts:

Monday- Acts 20:28

Tuesday- Acts 20:29-31

Wednesday- Titus 1:9

Thursday- 1 Tim. 5:17

Friday- 1 Thess. 5:12

Saturday- Heb. 13:17