



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 #390

Col. 3:16- “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with Psalms, hymns, and Spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Paul’s words to the Colossian church fill a section that defines their relationship with each other as Christians. In this chapter Paul says:

- Do not lie to one another (v9)
- Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (v12)
- Forgive each other. (v13)
- Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. (v15)
- Teach and admonish one another through singing. (v16)

How we treat one another is a reflection of how we feel about one another. Through Jesus we are connected to each other and have a special bond for one another. We are in this together and we need each other.

Our verse today is often used to show the type of music that God approves of today. We sing. One of the characteristics of the churches of Christ is vocal music. Friends who do not understand often reply, “you don’t have music in your church.” No, we don’t use instruments. We sing and singing is music. The reason? It’s not our tradition or to be unique, it’s according to the New Testament. Nine times in the N.T. singing is found in relationship to worship of God. It is the only example we find of music in the church. Brethren sang. There are no examples of the early church using instruments. History supports that fact. Instead of being progressive, my intention is to look backward and to follow the example and pattern we find in the N.T. To be “primitive” and to follow the blueprint established by God. Some say, “There are no verses that say that, ‘thou shall not use a piano.’” Correct. But God said “sing.” If I do that, then I am following God’s pattern. It’s not hard.

Often, that is the extent of these verses for us—a discussion of music authorized by God. We overlook the opening expression of this passage, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you.” That’s a rich expression and it defines who we are and the motive of what we do. God’s word fills our heart. From that heart filled life comes our behavior, our character and our attitudes. I wonder if we are too filled with the world sometimes. As a result we become anxious, angry and selfish. Would being filled with Christ’s word make us different? I tend to think so. Christ’s words will take us back to the Gospels where

we find the self-less, loving Savior who had the heart of a servant. How can those words fill my heart, and they not affect me, and change me? What a pure example. What a powerful statement.

Fill your hearts with Christ's words. His words of doctrine....his words of what is right....his words of devotion to God...his prayers...his life...his sacrifice.... His love. It seems that the more I am filled with Christ, as Paul told the Galatians, ' Christ lives in me,' then the less of Roger I will in my heart. The trouble I find myself in is not because of Christ's words in my heart, but too much of me in my heart.

Now this brings us to a couple of practical thoughts. First, how do I get Christ's words to fill my heart? That's up to me. I have to put them there. It comes from reading the Bible, thinking Godly, and wanting God in my heart. It doesn't just happen. It doesn't just happen just because I sit in a church building and hear some preacher preach. Some are filled with anger because they have saturated themselves with people and things that make them angry. The music they listen to, the people they hang out with, the shows they watch all lead down the road to anger. With others it is wealth and stuff. With other's it is lust. With others it's self. Why are we like this? It's what we have chosen and what we fill our life with.

Paul's words in Phil. 4:8, to let your mind dwell upon the things that are right, pure, honorable, lovely, shows us exactly how all of this works. The psalmist in Psa. 1 says that the righteous man meditates upon God's word day and night. Being filled is a matter of what I am putting in my bucket each day. If I fill my bucket full of junk, then that's what fills my heart. A dear friend of mine years ago wrote, "Each day, dump the junk!" That's it.

The heart filled with Christ's words will sing thankfully to God. In the midst of our storms, the heart filled with Christ will continue to praise God. Such a heart will be cheerful and an encouragement to others. It will be a source of refreshment to those it comes in contact. We sometimes say, " Well, that's just the way that person is." No, it's because they are filled with Christ's words. Instead of gathering rocks to throw, like the Pharisees did when they brought the adulteress woman to Christ, he forgave her and gave her a second chance. Instead of rolling the lip as they did toward Zaccheus, Jesus went to his home.

God's word is living and active. Get it inside of you and it will do things to you. It will change you. It will allow you to see the world differently. It's a wonderful affect. I've been under the influence of Christ's words for a long time and I wouldn't trade that for anything. It has a way of bringing me back where I need to be when I get out of line, and it has a wonderful way of molding and shaping attitudes, outlooks and behavior.

Under the influence—that's what Paul is talking about. Under the influence of God's word.

Roger Shouse

Some additional thoughts:

Monday- Psa. 1:1,2

Tuesday- Psa. 9:1

Wednesday- Psa. 19:14

Thursday- Rom. 8:9

Friday- Eph. 3:16,17

Saturday- John 14:23

