



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 #542

Hebrews 12:7- “It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?”

Our passage today shows us how God views Christians and it helps explain why God does what he does. He views Christians as his children, which we are. We belong to him. Paul’s writings talk about being adopted, other expressions use the terminology of the household of God. Family, when it’s healthy and love based, there is nothing like it. Most of us can’t get enough time with our families. When the kids are grown and out on their own, coming home to Mom and Dad is an exciting time.

Within our passage is the concept of authority. It says, “God deals with you as sons...” That includes love and acceptance, but also admonitions, lessons, and as the verse identifies, discipline. Several verses are given to show the comparison between the discipline of our earthly fathers and the discipline from God. Discipline isn’t pleasant at the moment we are told. We don’t need a Bible verse to tell us that—having been there, most of us wouldn’t argue much with that revelation. Whether it was a spank on the behind, grounding, standing in the corner, having to do some extra work, discipline isn’t fun. It’s not intended to be. It comes after the child has done something wrong. The child isn’t disciplined for doing what he was supposed to do, it’s the opposite. When the child hasn’t done what he was supposed to do, or worse, he has chosen to do wrong things, then the discipline comes.

Discipline shows that the parent, or in our passage, God, doesn’t approve of what we did. Discipline has a way of grabbing our attention and making us realize that we best stop what is wrong and start doing what is right, because the parent means business. Throughout Proverbs God tells us that a child that gets his way will bring sorrow and shame to his parents. God says to not spare the rod. Modernists today would scream at such verses. They tell you if you spank your child he’ll be off mentally and emotionally, likely to grow up violent, and may even turn to crime. One report I read, tried to explain the reasoning behind robbing banks with being spanked as a child. God is not defending abuse, or injuring the child. However, unlike modernists, God wants the parents to raise the child and to teach them about rules, authority, and consequences. The home is not a democracy. The parent is in charge and must take charge.

God disciplines us today. Have you ever been spanked by God? How is this done and why? The discipline of God comes in many forms. The most obvious way is thru the word of God. When Hebrews describes the Bible as living and active and sharper than a two edged sword, it is showing the power and

intent of the Bible. It has a way of working on our conscience. It moves us to better behavior. It leads us to repentance. The Word Works!

God also uses the word preached to bring about the corrective changes in us. People once said of sermons, “that stepped on my toes,” meaning that got me, that stung me, that hit me. It should. That is one of the purposes of sermons. They are not intended to be a happy pill that makes us laugh and forget life for thirty minutes. Sermons should teach, warn, and correct when necessary. Paul put it this way, “reprove, rebuke and exhort,” when he reminded Timothy about preaching. Some play spiritual dodge ball with the sermon, never making applications, never allowing it to hit them, and never benefitting for what was said. Sermons can help us. God can work thru sermons to discipline us.

God also uses other Christians to discipline us. It may come from a heart to heart discussion. Someone cares enough that they want to help you. It may be the leadership in the church that does this, they should. Sometimes we don’t listen, the talks may be more frequent, more intense. At stake is our souls. Wrong behavior has many implications, first and foremost is our souls. Our families can be at stake. Our circle of friends can be influenced. Eventually, when one is stubborn and refuses to stop wrong behavior, the church has to discipline by removing fellowship. That’s something that few ever talk about anymore. It’s not excommunicating, it is not shunning, but it’s a change in our relationship because one continues to continue in sin. Doing nothing gives the impression of approval. Doing nothing shows lack of concern and love. Places like **1 Cor. 5** and **2 Thess. 3** talk about this. It’s not a happy day when discipline must take place. It isn’t at home. It isn’t at church. It’s done, like at home, so happier days can return. It’s done to help someone who is crashing their lives and refusing to go by God’s rules.

God also works on our conscience. Guilt is a wonderful way to stop what is wrong. God doesn’t intend for us to live in the land of guilt, but he uses it to remind us that we are not doing right. A guilty conscience is not a fun place to be. It will bring one to his knees to ask God for forgiveness.

Discipline—never pleasant, but necessary to teach and keep one going in the right direction. If God didn’t care, he’d let us go, away from him and straight to Hell. If the parent didn’t care, they’d let the child quit school, join a street gang and engage in crime. The reason God steps in, the reason the parent jumps in, is because of love.

God gives you so much and he wants you to spend forever with him in Heaven. There are times we forget that. There are times the trinkets that Satan dangles before our eyes, look so appealing that we are willing to trade our souls in for them. We get discouraged and weary and simply want to quit. We listen to the wrong things and get confused. We become selfish, once again. God is not going to sit on the sidelines and lose you. He’ll bring the arsenal of Heaven out to save you. He wants you in Heaven!

Spiritual spankings are necessary. We need them once in a while. They work, when we get it and get back to God.

Roger Shouse

