



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 # 305

Proverbs 8:13-“ The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way, and the perverted mouth, I hate.”

One of the many themes in the book of Proverbs is “The fear of the Lord.” The book begins by telling us that the “Fear of the Lord, is the beginning of knowledge.” (1:7) Fear as used in Proverbs is the idea of reverence, or respect. To care about what is important to someone else, and in this case, God. To fear God is not to be afraid of God, rather it is to respect, care for and honor what is important to God.

Our passage brings out a negative. The fear of the Lord, we are told, is to hate evil. That statement troubles some of us. We’ve gotten the idea that Christians are not supposed to hate at all. The word “hate” is almost a curse word and we would never use it. Here we find a positive way to do the negative—if that makes any sense. To care for God is to hate what God hates. The writer lists a series of wrong behaviors. These are all sinful. They wreck the soul, destroy our relationship with others, especially God, and they cause us all kinds of trouble. Little good, if any could be said about these things. The list includes: evil; pride; arrogance; evil way; and the perverted mouth. Those items are very generic. Evil comes in many forms. Evil in motives, evil in heart, evil ways, evil plans, evil person. Pride and arrogance are twins. Where you find one, you will always find the other. Pride is what is on the inside and arrogance is what is on the outside. We witness arrogance. The word “perverted” in our times has a sexual tone to it. The word actually means, “crooked” or “bent.” It’s not straight like God, rather, it’s crooked. The perverted mouth would include lying, falsehoods, even false teaching. They are not straight. They are not true. They are perverted. They are crooked.

The writer of this passage proclaims that he hates these things. I expect if I were to say that in a sermon, some dear sister would correct me on the side and remind me that we should never use the word “hate.” But God does. The Bible does. Some things are just plain wrong. Don’t cover up the blackness of things by pretending that they are white. Don’t fall for the idea that there is good in everything. No there’s not. There’s nothing good about evil. NOTHING. There’s nothing good about false things. NOTHING.

It’s OK to say “I hate what God hates.” Evil destroys. Crooked ways confuse and lead people into error. They are not good, no matter who they come from. Now that’s where a lot of our problems are found in all of this. I hate what God hates. The crooked message from churches that do not teach the truth....family members that are evil....politicians that lie....superstars that mock God....I hate what God hates.

Now, what do we do with this hatred? Do we bomb those that oppose God? No. Do we make offensive signs and march up and down streets, screaming at the top of our lungs? No. You don't find the apostles doing those things. What do we do with this hatred?

First, we do not let it turn into bitterness and destroy us. It didn't Jesus. Bitterness leads to wrath and all kinds of unhealthy attitudes. The hatred cannot eat us up on the inside. That is never right.

Next, we pray. We pray for those we hate. Didn't Jesus say to love your enemies? Pray that they will change. Pray for God to open the door of their hearts. Pray for them to follow Jesus Christ.

Finally, we continue to cling to what is good and right. We defend God's ways by being a part of them, and opposing wrong. Don't encourage wrong. Don't support wrong. I've walked out of movie theatres before. I had enough. I'd say to myself, "If they say one more bad word, I'm leaving." They did. So I did. I've written letters to the editor of newspapers before. I've called schools and talked to principals. Don't ever be rude, obnoxious or threatening—never. But on the other hand, don't try to make a friend out of things God hates. Some things are just wrong—and that's just the way it is. Those that do them need to be taught, encouraged to repent and change their behavior. When they won't, we part ways. Light and darkness don't mix. Those of darkness hate light, that's what Jesus tells us. Remember we are engaged in a spiritual combat and at stake is not the world, but your heart, your family, and finally your soul.

Roger Shouse