



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 # 537

Romans 12:3 *“For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”*

Proper thinking—that's Paul's thoughts here. Not just proper thinking, but proper thinking of self. That's hard. We tend to bounce from one extreme to the other. It's like watching some kid bowl with the bumpers up. His ball won't go into the gutter, it hits one of those bumpers and bounces on down the lane. Back and forth, from one side to the other, until it finally reaches the pins. We can be just like that. One extreme is to think too much of ourselves. We can be Mr. Big Shot, thinking the company, the church, even the nation, can't get along without us. Our opinions, are the best. Our ideas trump all others. This thinking sees too much of self and too little of others. Every success, every victory, every accomplished is thought to be directly attributed to self. Thinking too much of self feeds an ego and pushes the envelope of arrogance and pride. We must fight that and work at not thinking too highly of self. Parents can be a leading cause of this when they treat little Johnny as if the world spins around him. Johnny grows up thinking the world owes him and that he is better than everyone else. Little Johnny will have a lifetime of turmoil because his thinking is off center.

The other extreme is to think too little of self, to the extent of low or no self esteem. This guy feels like a failure and tells everyone he meets that very thing. He lacks confidence. He feels like he is a loser. He second guesses everything. He hides in the shadows of life because of this. He's afraid to try things, express his ideas or do things, because "most won't like." His life, just the opposite of the one who thinks too highly of himself, will also be plagued with turmoil, sorrow and defeatism.

Neither extreme is to be desired nor chosen. Both are full of problems and both create problems for others. These two would do well to pour of pint of blood in other.

Getting the proper thoughts about self is hard. At home we are treated like the king. At work, it's more like a dunce. Egos are strong in the music world, the athletic world and even at work. Like a Kentucky horse race, everyone is jockeying for position, place and promotion. If they have to step on you to get there, they will do that. If you don't stand up for yourself, you'll be left behind. This is hard stuff.

Spiritually, this has major implications for us. How we see ourselves affects our relationship with others, and especially with Christ. Am I a loser to God? Am I the greatest thing since the apostles came along? Extremes—we see them in the church family. One guy wants to do everything, even though he's not trained and may lack talent. He doesn't see that and he thinks he has so much to add. The other guy won't do anything because he lacks confidence, fears he'll fail and is content to sit on the sidelines of life. Mr. Bigshot and Mr. Nobody—what a pair they make!

God helps us here. He doesn't leave us alone to figure out our proper thinking of self, He shows us and tells us.

- First, we are all sinners who need Jesus. All of us. No exceptions here. We may think if we were living back in the Bible times that we'd be right with the Jewish boys who refused to bow before the Babylonian idol. Maybe? We may think that we'd been with Paul on his journeys? Who knows? Before we put on our Superman outfit, remember, we need Jesus. We need His grace, we need His forgiveness, we need His guidance. We are all in the same boat. We are all equal with everyone else here.
- Secondly, although we are all sinners, God doesn't give up on us or cast us off as losers. God loves us. He loves us so much that He sent the best of Heaven, Jesus, just for us. God gave His heart and His will in the Bible.

Knowing yourself helps with your journey to Heaven. Satan certainly knows you. He knows what buttons to push. He knows what temptations work with you. While lust may not bother some, it crushes others. Greed may have no affect on some, and others can't get it out of their mind. The thirst for power and position drives many. Others want nothing to do with it. Satan knows. He knows just what you need. It helps to know yourself. You can shore up and be watchful in your weak areas. You can put more attention on those areas and learn how to resist Satan's attacks. You can develop your strong areas and become a spiritual giant for God. Seeing yourself as you really are makes you realize two things:

- It makes you see that you need others and you especially need Jesus. You realize that you get discouraged, confused and often need a kick in the pants. You are thankful for brethren that challenges you, pushes you and connects you to Jesus. You need that. I need that. You realize brethren are the Lord's help to strengthen you. Knowing this, you'll spend time with your church family. You'll get to know them, like them and even pray for them. You need them.
- It also makes you realize that you make a difference in someone's life. All of us do that. Some do it on a grand scale and they help tons of people, others are more subtle about it and it's just a few lives that they touch, but they are making a difference. I think of the mom who early in the morning, as she is trying to get everyone off that day, shares her love and reminds the troops who they are. She's making a difference. I think of that young preacher who pours his heart out on Sunday morning trying to teach and guide souls to Jesus. He many never realize the impact that he is having on those people who are blessed to hear him week after week. I think of the business owner, who in the midst of a busy day, reminds his people of doing things right and going out of the way for others. He's making a difference. I think of a retired grandmother in another state who emails these Jump Starts to her friends every day. She is making a difference.

Seeing yourself just the right way is hard. When you get it, you'll see that God loves you and wants the best for you. You'll see that others are counting on you, even today. You'll see that your presence makes a difference. There are hearts that rejoice when you come home. There are faces that light up when you walk into the church building. There are those who do the same for you.

Seeing yourself in the right way...not one extreme, nor the other, but just the way God sees you. He's made some promises for you. He's counting on you. He wants to work with and through you. He's not done with you. He wants His home to become your home someday.

Roger Shouse

