



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 #516

Matthew 4:4 *“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”*

Words—that powerful, ancient and wonderful way of communication is the avenue God chose to reveal His will and open His heart to us. Words. The Bible begins with, “In the beginning God SAID...” The Gospel of John opens with, “In the beginning was the Word...”

It's been said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but God didn't think so. He chose words. He could have sent a picture of the crucifixion, but instead He sent words about it. He could have shown one image of Heaven, but instead He chose a postcard of words.

There is something up front about words. Art and music are subject to interpretation. The use of color, and other impressions all tell a story in an artist's painting. I never did understand that. I've stood in an art museum and listened to someone explain what the painting I was looking at meant. She talked about the anger of a broken childhood, the influence of war and a bunch of things that I never saw in that painting. Classical music is the same way. I hear it getting louder and softer but those are intended to be moods which stand for something. Words aren't like that. They have definitions. They can be translated, copied, memorized, repeated over and over.

Our passage comes from the temptation of Jesus. Satan was trying to trick the Lord. Jesus had fasted for forty days. He was hungry. Satan told Jesus to turn the rocks into bread. Jesus didn't do it. He never did what Satan wanted. Instead He responded with our verse.

Notice Jesus didn't say, don't eat bread at all. He understood that we need bread. Bread fills the body and is the energy to keep us going. But there's something that bread can't feed and that is the soul. A person needs bread and the word of God. We need them both. Every word that proceeds from God's mouth is important. Timothy was told that “All Scripture is inspired of God and is profitable...” All Scripture...Every word. God didn't ramble on with useless things. He didn't put filler in just to lengthen the book.

God's word is to our soul what bread is to our bodies. It nourishes, strengthens, energizes and keeps us going. Without it we become weak, sickly and will die. That's the value of the Word of God.

Words are vehicles that move our minds, hearts and behavior. When driving and we come to an intersection and we see the word STOP—we do that. A professor in British Columbia a few years ago was ticketed for “rolling through” a stop sign. Instead of paying the fine, he took it to court. Eventually it went to the highest

court. His argument that he stuck with was, 'what does stop mean?' The scary thing is that this guy was teaching college. It wasn't the word "Stop" that needed to be defined, it was his behavior. The same is taking place when some read God's word today. It's amazing to hear what folks say about the Bible. You'll hear people proudly declare that "No where does the Bible condemn homosexuality?" Really? Guess that person never read the Bible. It's there. Others will say, "God doesn't care about divorce." Really? That's not what the Bible says. "You don't have to be baptized to be saved." Really? You didn't come to that conclusion from reading the Bible, because it says just the opposite. Or this one, "Jesus doesn't care what you do, just love Him." Really? He said that? No, He didn't. What He did say was, "If you love Me, keep my commandments."

We need to let God speak for God. We need to see how God uses words. We need to understand God's words. But what a powerful avenue God chose to declare His will and purpose-words. Words have meaning. Words teach. Words warn. Words comfort. Words answers questions. Words reveal the heart. God's words-how privileged we are to have them, to know them, and to live by them.

There is an old Bee Jee's song that I had stuck in my head recently. It was a love song and one of the main expressions that is repeated in the song is the line, "...it's only words..." In our context today, talking about God's word, it's more than words. At the wedding we want God's word read. At the funeral, it's not the sports page, it's not the comics, nor the financial page that we want. We want God's word. When folks are scared, it's God's word they turn to. My dad served in WW II. He still has his metal plated New Testament that the Marines gave him. A Bible and bullets and off to battle. We understand that there is something special about those words-His words.

These words are living and active. They are sharper than a sword. They have a way of getting through thick heads, and hard hearts. They have a way of changing attitudes, and straightening out crooked behavior. They are the means in which we come to know and love our Savior. He not only gave His blood for us, but He also gave His words.

We need those words. They are substance to our souls. We live on every word that proceeds out of God's mouth. How blessed we are that He cared enough to speak and then to have those words recorded, preserved and available.

Do you have a favorite verse? Most of us do. Have you tackled reading the entire Bible cover to cover? It's a great story. It's His story. It's your story as well. Get to know it. Believe it. Tell others about it. Memorize it. Repeat it. Preach it. Live it.

I've heard it said, that a worn and tattered Bible belongs to a person whose life isn't that way. We need God's words...we need them, even today!

Roger Shouse

