



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 #447

Neh. 2:2- “So the king said to me, why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart. Then I was very much afraid.”

Sadness—many people walk through life this way. It’s not that they want to be sad, they just are. Some folks have been sad for a long, long time. Nehemiah in our passage was sad. The king noticed. For Nehemiah, it was news about his homeland that made him sad. The walls around the city remained in ruins after the Babylonian invasion. The city was coming back to life, but no one was building the walls. Without walls, the city was vulnerable. How could the people ever be safe without walls? When Nehemiah first heard about this, in chapter one, he wept for many days. He prayed to God. Eventually, he got the courage to speak to the king, and he went and led the nation in building the walls—in just over 50 days.

Some are sad because of personal stuff—family problems, failing health, loss of jobs, failed relationships, funerals, dumb choices and decisions made, sin in their life and people who disappoint. Others are sad on a larger scale, like Nehemiah. They see our country becoming more secular. They see the leadership at church is out of touch. Things are not right.

I’ve been told that a good cry now and then is good for a person. Maybe that’s a way of venting frustrations. Sadness has a way of making our mood dark and gloomy. Sadness keeps some people in bed, when they ought to be at school or work. Sadness is like letting the air out of a balloon---we are left wondering if we will ever be the same.

Children get sad, usually when they don’t get their way. But they seem to bounce back faster than adults. For us, the gloom can hang around like a dark November day.

How do you comfort someone who is sad? What do you say? Can anything be done?

Nehemiah prayed. That book carries many prayers. He was praying all the time. There is a hymn that says “Are you weary and heavy laden.....take it to the Lord in prayer”. God understands when others don’t. Above all, God can forgive. The more we pray, the more we are inviting God into our world.

Nehemiah did something. No one was doing anything. It wasn’t his job. His concerns, prayers and faith led him to do things. He went to the king. He was scared to do that. He went to Jerusalem and rallied the people. He dealt with discouragement, opposition and ridicule. Use the sadness to make changes, count blessings, to become a better person. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “ If everyone would sweep in front of their house, the world would become cleaner.” We wait for others to do it. We wait for someone else to do it all. Just sweep in front of your house---not literally with a broom, but spiritually, emotionally. Do what you can. Don’t wait for others ----you may wait a long time. Don’t try to sweep the whole city, you can’t do that. But do what you can.

God’s purpose for us is not happiness---it’s holiness. I believe the holy life that is rich in Christ will open our eyes to the wonderful love that God has for us. That fills the heart, especially when it is missing a loved one, or others have disappointed. Knowing that God has been thinking about you for a long, long time and that God is counting upon you, does something to a person.

Rainbows can only be seen after it rains. It takes sunshine to make rainbows. Some days are so dark in our hearts. We may wonder if we will ever see sunshine. You will. It takes time. Don't isolate yourself, get out of the cave, as God told Elijah, and get around others. Eat well. Sleep well. It's hard when you don't feel like it, but that's part of getting back to where you need to be. Most important, don't give up on God. He alone can make the sunshine and the rainbows.

So open the blinds, you might see the sun peaking through, even today.

Roger Shouse