



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)

November 3, 2013

Jump Start # 446

John 14:1 *“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.”*

The traveling salesman in the Music Man declared that there was trouble in River City. He got the town riled up because they had a pool hall and that was the beginning of decline for all the young people. Trouble abounds.

This expression of Jesus actually means do not become discouraged. Discouragement is a “heart” condition. When things aren’t right, we don’t “feel like doing anything.” We say, “my hearts’ not in it right now...” Heart problems.

The cause of the heart problem in our context was the announcement that Jesus was leaving. He had an appointment at Calvary. He understood. The disciples didn’t. He spoke these words to “build up” their hearts.

Many things can discourage us. Sometimes the very things that OUGHT to encourage us actually discourages us. Family get togethers over the holidays can be stressful and trying. Home for the holidays isn’t a welcome thought for many people. With the mashed potatoes and green beans, there always seems to be a heaping of guilt, and words of disappointment—often from parents. That discourages. Our jobs can discourage us. More work and less pay. We tell ourselves that Lincoln freed the slaves, but we begin to wonder. Even church services can discourage. The preacher loves to remind us of our failures. He stacks on layers and layers of things we ought to be doing, which we are not. The pressure, guilt and disappoint mount. Small crowds can discourage.

There is much that can give us heart problems. We don’t really need a lesson in what causes them, we know. That’s easy. What we need to know is how to keep these things from getting the best of us. Notice how this verse is structured. Jesus says, “Do not let your heart be troubled...” This statement does more than imply, it shouts that we are responsible for our spiritual heart condition. We are responsible for how things affect us.

You might think, what about those grown kids? Or, that boss of mine? Or, the church services? Those are out of my control. I can't do anything about those things. True. But you do control how those things will affect you and how they will trouble your heart.

Discouragement is just a few steps away from depression. We tend to give up when the dark clouds hang over our heads. We give up on finding a job. We give up on the marriage. We give up on losing weight. And often, we give up on God. Jesus is saying, "Don't do that." Believe in God...believe in Me.

What follows in this passage are thoughts of Heaven. Jesus goes and then He comes. He takes us to His Father's home—Heaven. These thoughts help. Jesus hasn't forgotten us nor given up on us. He's coming—for us. Hang in there...keep trusting.

Prayer helps a bunch when you're all knotted up on the insides. "Take it to the Lord in prayer," is powerful. Tell God your problems. Talk to the Lord. Read His word, especially the Psalms. Listen. Think. Talk. Chew on things a while.

Don't let a troubled heart stay that way. It's not good. It tends to get worse. Seek the help of good brethren. Find ways to strengthen yourself, as David did when his men and King Saul all had turned on him. There was no one else. He encouraged himself. Raise the blinds. Get out of the house. Get to worship. Be around others. You'll find many of those thoughts in the life of Elijah when he was hiding in a cave, scared of Jezebel. God's ways works. You won't feel like doing them—if you did, you wouldn't have a troubled heart. So you go to church when you don't feel like it. You read when you don't feel like it. You talk to God when it's hard to do. In time, your heart gets stronger and you're back to your ole' self again. This time, you have something to be thankful for—God, once again, has helped you. He doesn't give up on you when you're hiding in your cave, nor when you simply don't feel like doing things. God won't do that.

Let not your heart be troubled—Ok, Lord, I won't. But help me when, I forget!

Roger Shouse

