



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 # 1184

Proverbs 14:29 "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly."

Our verse today is about the demonstration of one's character. There are two avenues, two choices, two ways to go here. The first is the one who is slow to anger. His character is built upon patience. Our passage says such a person has great understanding. Sure he gets angry, but not all the time and not at the slightest thing. This person sees people above things. He understands that mistakes and accidents are not the same as rebellion and intention. There is a difference between spilling milk at the table and throwing a glass of milk because one doesn't get his way. The slow to anger has his spirit under control.

The other person is said to be "quick-tempered." A footnote in the margin explains this as "short of spirit." We'd use the expression, short fuse. It doesn't take much to set this guy off. He leaves a trail of bad words, chewed out people and slammed doors everywhere he goes. He's just as likely to explode in church as he is at home or at a store. He's bites the head off of restaurant people if they are slow or they mixed his order. Road rage is a constant companion with this person. His kids fear messing up because they know a volcano of anger will erupt. They do not have a warm relationship because they are always on edge. His ways, his tone, his language is being copied by his kids. The quick-tempered person often becomes the bully that everyone fears. He is the neighbor that no one can get along with. He is the one in church who is always causing a stink about everything. The passage tells us what we already know. His quick tempered ways exalts folly. He is always embarrassing his wife by chewing out people in public. His temper is quick. He is impulsive. He doesn't think before he speaks. His pride keeps him from apologizing. People shy away from him and his family suffers because no one really wants to be near him. He has driven people away from the church. Behind his back people think of him as a jerk. He is obnoxious, offensive and mean. His comments in a Bible class illustrate a narrow, shallow and bigoted attitude. He is a real mess.

Modern versions use the expression "impulsive" for quick-tempered. We understand impulsive. Impulsive spending is what happens when you go to the store for three items and you come home with a dozen. Impulsive spending crashes the budget. Impulsive is the mark of someone who has not planned nor thought things out. The moment catches them and they act.

Impulse is how Satan operates. He wants us to be impulsive in our ways. When we stop and think and consider, most times, sin isn't as pretty as Satan paints it. Impulse doesn't think about tomorrow. It's all about the moment. Impulse doesn't consider consequences. The New Testament has an antidote to impulsive behavior. It's called "girding your mind." Peter said that in 1 Pet 1:13. Girding your mind means, "preparing your mind." Girding is what happened back then when a person put his clothes on. He wrapped his garments

around him. He "girded his loins." Girding your mind is the same idea. It's taking the time to consider things, to think things out, to see ahead. We get in trouble when we don't do that. Things happen and we say, "I wasn't thinking." That's right. We weren't. Had we been thinking, we wouldn't have said or done what we did. Daniel we are told, made up his mind not to eat the kings food (1:8). Daniel was thinking things out. He was girding his mind.

Impulse is what happens when the young college girl gets caught up in the moment and has sex with her boyfriend. She soon learns that she is pregnant. She must drop out of school. Her mom and dad have to take care of the child while she works minimum wages. Her plans, life and future have all been altered by a "moments decision" that was made without thinking. Impulsive, she did not think ahead. She did not think it out. The tears of guilt will not undo what has been done.

The same goes for the guy at work who fudges a few numbers here and there and cooks a few books so he can embezzle some corporate money. He doesn't think. He never sees the police showing up to escort him out in handcuffs. He never sees a trial and jail time. He doesn't think about what this will do to his family. He wasn't thinking. That's the problem. He just wasn't thinking.

But the opposite is just as true. Take a couple who work with a budget every month. They save and invest from every paycheck. They live within their means. Retirement comes and they have built a nice nest egg. They did this by not living paycheck to paycheck, but thinking things out. Not being impulsive, but having a plan and sticking to that plan.

Or, here is a man who takes seriously the work of the Lord. He sets aside some time every day to read God's word. He takes notes on passages and grows in his faith. His love for the Lord compels him to encourage others. He and his wife open their home often for others. He has thought all of this out. This is the way to go. He is making a difference in the lives of others. Generous, kind and godly are the choices of his life. In time, he is asked to teach classes at church. When leaders are needed, his name comes up naturally. He has set his mind upon the things of God. This didn't just happen. He thought it out.

Our passage is not just about the subject of anger. There is a much larger picture here. It is a way of life. It is thinking and planning things out. It is taking thought of what our words and actions will do. It is choosing not to be impulsive-whether in attitude, words or actions. It has been said that 'Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.' Folks won't stumble into Heaven by accident. There's no impulse that will rocket someone into Heaven. It's measured steps. It's a deliberate choice. It's thought out. It's planned. The way of the Cross, we sing, leads home.

This is more than just a cool verse. It is all about us. It is a postcard of us, sent from Heaven. We are thinking things out or we are impulsive. We are growing or we are getting into trouble. We are making a difference or we are damaging others.

Think it out...that's God's way. Is it yours?

Roger Shouse

