



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 8, 2015

Jump Start # 1455

Romans 13:14 *"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provisions for the flesh in regard to its lusts."*

Put on Christ is a common expression used by the apostle Paul. It shouldn't be viewed like we put on a jacket. This morning it's cool here in Southern Indiana. It's jacket time. By the afternoon it will warm up to the point that a person won't need a jacket. Put on and take off are what we are doing these past few days. When one puts on Christ, there is no taking off. Church services end, we walk out the building, but Christ stays on. Christ becomes a part of us.

In the verse before, Paul reminds these Roman Christians to behave properly. He warns them not to get drunk, not to engage in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not to have strife or jealousy. Behave yourself. Like a parent telling a child, the apostle is telling brethren, reminding them of who they are. This thought extends to the end of our verse today where he says, "make no provisions for the flesh".

A couple of thoughts for us:

Folks that know need to be reminded. You'd think if these people were Christians, then they ought to know not to get drunk, fuss with one another and be involved in inappropriate sexual sins. You'd think they'd know. Reminders are important. Folks forget. They get tempted and pulled away from Christ. Today's preachers and shepherds need to see a lesson here. We need to continually return to the fundamentals and never assume that "they know." Paul reminded them. If Paul did, we need to do the same. I was watching a ballgame the other night, on came some advertisements about upcoming new shows. Sex, sex, sex. About every third commercial was alcohol. Do you think we need Paul's reminders today? Mentioning something in one sermon, one time, isn't enough. Teach. Warn. Admonish.

Make no provisions for the flesh is an interesting expression. It's borrowed from the Roman military. As the Empire moved into new lands and battles took place, officers placed at the back of the line would burn the bridges that they just crossed. The Empire was marching forward. There was no going back. It was fight or die. Retreating was not an option. From this concept, we get the expression, "not to burn bridges behind you." We often say that when switching jobs. "Don't burn your bridges," in other words, don't make enemies when you leave.

(OVER)

Don't trash the place and the people. Some time down the road, you may come back or may need a reference from them. If you leave a place in an ugly manner, it may come back and haunt you. Don't burn your bridges means you may need to go back over those bridges again. The way Paul uses this concept is to burn the bridges, make no provisions for sin. Cut the ties to sin. Leave the people that mess you up and harm you spiritually. Do not leave a return path back to sin. It's only onward and upward with the Lord. It's one way. There is no going back.

That's a concept that we may not have taught enough. It seems some keep one foot in the world. They still hang out with the drinking buddies, who are loose on their talk and their morals. Before long, the Christian is back drinking beer and telling offensive jokes. He never burned the bridges to his past. It doesn't work to be a Christian on Sunday and a man of the world on Monday. Sooner or later, Christ will lose. Back to the world he goes. The very things Paul warns about, getting drunk, sexual sins, jealousy, strife will be back in his life again. Such a person will announce that Christianity is a joke and a sham. He will mock Christians. He will think that he knows everything there is about Christians when he never was serious himself. He never jumped in completely with the Lord. He never put on Christ. He is a pitiful spokesman for Christianity, because he never understood it from the beginning. He refused to burn his bridges to the past and he continued to cross those bridges over and over until one day he just stayed on the other side. His mistake was that Jesus was just a hobby to him. Jesus never became his life. He was never totally in. But now, he is totally out.

Make no provisions for the flesh in regards to its lusts. Don't let lust and temptation take over the wheel of your life. You stay in control. You stay in the drivers seat with both of your hands on the wheel. God wants us to be serious about our faith and our souls. He wants us to be that new man as the Ephesians were told. We are to walk in newness of life as the Romans were told. Paul told the Galatians that he had crucified himself. He no longer lived. Christ was living in him. It's that serious, dedicated, committed heart that will make it. Those who refused to burn the bridges to their past will find themselves going back over those bridges someday. They will return to the far country. They will make a mess of things.

Cutting ties to our past isn't easy. Facebook makes it hard. All those folks from the past who now want to be your friend. Be careful. There is a reason some are in the past. Reconnecting with people you once dated may be Satan's attempt to rebuild those bridges that you tore down along time ago. Connecting with people that are a painful and sinful part of your life opens the bridge to a life you thought you left. Be careful.

Replace those people in the past with new people. Surround yourself with quality people who are interested in Heaven. Get around those who are winning spiritually. Learn from those who know the Lord and love His ways. Bring those people into your home and into your lives. Let your children grow up seeing godly men and women in their lives. Let them hear you talk about spiritual heroes. Former NBA stars who are found passed out in brothels and are nearly dead from drug overdose is not the heroes our kids need. The rich and famous today are often the dumb and godless today. There is more to life than making the big bucks. Character, heart, Christ, being a servant are all important. They learn those things not from godless TV but from the people of God.

Burn those bridges to the past! Forge ahead with the people of God. It's said that all of us will be exactly the way we are in five years except for the books we read and the people we associate with. Influencers. We don't like putting junk into our bellies. Let's stop putting junk into our souls. Fill your heart and your soul with great people and great material.

Make no provisions...

Roger Shouse