



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 # 1566

Luke 8:15 *“But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”*

Throughout the Bible, God warns His people not to be deceived. There are many such warnings. Deception involves lies, twisting facts and fraud. Eve was convinced that Satan was telling her the truth. She was deceived. The Corinthians were told that evil companions corrupt good morals. Do not be deceived. Don't be fooled. Keep your eyes open. The worst form of deception is when one has deceived himself. A person convinces himself that he is right when he isn't. He believes the lies that he tells himself.

How does a person keep from being deceived? How do we not deceive ourselves? The answer is found in our verse today. Coming from the parable of the sower, the seed which fell in the good soil, produced and grew. It accomplished what the farmer wanted. This is the reason why he took the time to sow the seed. He didn't do this for exercise. He wasn't just getting rid of some left over seed. His intention was to grow plants that would be harvested in the fall. The good soil represents that heart that is honest and good. That's the key to keeping deception at arm's length.

Honesty. First, with the word of God. Read it carefully. Let God, through His word, explain things. Read the context. Study. Think. Understand words. Look at the principles. Honest. Don't add your own thoughts. Don't wiggle out from what God says. Don't look for excuses that keeps you from doing what God says. Honest with the word of God. This honesty carries the idea that God's word is sufficient for all that He wants us to do. We do not need anything else. This means by-laws, creeds, church manuals are not necessary or needed and only get in the way of God's word. If it's not in the Bible, why are we doing it? If it is in the Bible, then we better be doing it. Passages such as Philippians 4:9 and 2 Peter 1:3 emphasize the sufficiency of God's word. If everyone simply followed the Bible and nothing else, we would all be the same. The differences come from not doing everything the Bible says and adding additional laws and principles that are not found in the Bible. If a guy in the United States and a guy in Africa were both playing a game of Monopoly and they were following the original rules with no variations, the games would be the same. The differences come, when we start adding variations here and there, making our own house rules and then the games are not the same. This is what has happened in religion. Honest with God's word.

(OVER)

Next, comes being honest with yourself. Deception comes when lies are believed. The lies are not investigated and examined. They are not exposed as being lies. They are believed to be truthful and so they are accepted. Take Eve, for example. Satan had never talked to her before. She had no history with Satan. God made her. God provided for her. God walked with her in the garden. She had a long history with God and it was good. Satan comes along and tells her that God has not been truthful with her. Why believe that? Just because he said so? Check it out Eve. Do your homework. Consider what God has done and what Satan has done? Had Satan ever done anything good for her?

Being honest, includes, being honest with ourselves. This is where many deceptions find a foothold in our hearts. We live on denials, excuses and just do not want to admit that we are not the poster child of goodness. Being honest reveals the warts and scars in our lives. Being honest recognizes sin in our lives. Being honest sometimes isn't an image that we want to see of ourselves and especially we don't want others to see it. So, we hide the truth. We wear masks. We pretend. We do not want to admit that we struggle. We do not want to admit that we sleep in church. We do not want to admit that we forget to pray some days. We do not want to admit that temptation seems to get the best of us. So, we don't. We don't admit those things. Instead, we believe a lie. We tell ourselves that we are not so bad. We tell ourselves that we are better than others. The deception begins. We believe it ourselves.

Be honest. Be honest with yourself. You do not help yourself by keeping the deception going. Forget about image. Everyone is probably in the same boat you are in. Being honest will help you seek forgiveness from God. Being honest will help you seek God's help through your struggles. Being honest will help you help others.

Honest and good heart. That's the key.

I need Thee every hour...it is that thought and that prayer that will help you the most!

Roger Shouse