



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 # 1585

Philippians 3:2 "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision"

Our verse today reminds me of a parent who is handing the keys of the family car over to their teenager as she plans to go visit some friends. Be careful...be careful...be careful. Paul's words were more serious. Three times he uses the word "Beware." As Dorothy and the Tin Man danced down the yellow brick road, they sang, "Lion, tigers and bears, oh, my." Paul's list includes dogs, evil workers and false circumcision. Oh, my!

Some thoughts here:

Paul was trying to protect the brethren from danger. We need that. We can be naïve. We can be gullible. We can drink the poison of false doctrine without even recognizing it. Some can even ask for a second glass. Wolves who look like sheep was a warning Jesus made in the sermon on the mount. Ezekiel, long ago, used the analogy of the watchman who sees enemy coming. If he blows the trumpet he has done his job. If he blows the trumpet and the people ignore him, then they are at fault. However, if he sees danger coming, and does not warn, then the blood of the people will be upon him.

We need moms and dads to sound the warning to their kids. There is a lot of dangerous stuff out there that young people can innocently fall into and it can leave deep scars and mess them up for a long, long time. Drugs, alcohol, and porn can become life long battles. Parents know. Some have fought these battles all of their lives. Warnings should be sounded. Teaching purity, modesty and righteousness will affect what they do on dates and when they are with a group of friends. Knowing when to leave a party or when to leave a group of friends because things are not going the right direction will save them from so many heartaches. Will they know when to leave? Warnings. Beware...beware...beware.

We need shepherds in God's kingdom to sound warnings to the sheep they are watching. How can one do his job when he sees the sheep eating poisonous grass. How can he sit back and see the sheep heading to a dangerous cliff or walking too close to a wolf. Beware...beware...beware. In the disguise of religion, particularly, religious blogs, books and videos, all kinds of poison is being offered. It sounds good. The guy even uses some verses. The naïve, the gullible will take it in without consideration. He won't think things out. He doesn't see the false doctrine. He doesn't see the error

that he is now accepting and believing. Teaching God's word and knowing the word of God is a must.

Trouble often comes in a trinity. Here it is dogs, evil workers, and false circumcision. These were Jewish false teachers, Christians who had ulterior motives, and those who were set to cause harm to the kingdom. Their ways were wicked. Their thinking was bent. Their intentions were misguided. The results would be harmful. In Timothy, we read of some who had "shipwrecked" the faith of others. This passage reminds me of being in a room with several two year olds. You can't take your eyes off of them. This one is going here and that one is going there. Another one is putting something in his mouth that he shouldn't. Another one is throwing something at another child. About thirty minutes of that and most of us are done for the day. Trouble often comes in packs. I don't see, nor think that this was a united effort against the kingdom. The dogs, evil workers and false circumcision just happened to be present because God's people were present. We can put all of our attention upon dealing with the dogs when the false circumcision enters the back door. Trouble is like that. Be alert, Peter says. Beware, is what Paul says here.

Paul called this trouble what they really were: false, evil and dogs. Those are not nice words. These were not nice people. They were hurting God's people. They were a real threat. Recognize them. Call them for what they are. Some have trouble with this. Some would even call a snake, "nice." No, way. "Nice and dead," maybe, but never, NICE. Paul didn't try to turn a negative into a positive. He didn't put a nice spin on this problem. He wasn't optimistic about them. This is what they are and this is what you need to know. There are some who want to see you fail. There are some who would love to see a "For Sale" sign in the front yard of the church building. There are those who have no interest in the goodness of the Gospel. They want to shut what you do down. They want to silence your voice. They want to unplug your influence. They want you to go away and never be seen again. That's not nice! They are not nice! That's the point of this passage.

So what were the Philippians to do? Go and hide? Run away? No. They were to stay the course. They were to keep on keeping on. They were to keep their eyes on the horizon and sail onward. Trouble must be dealt with. Preachers and parents must prepare our young people as they head off to college. Equip them with the answers that they need to deal with evolution, the spirit of tolerance, and the pull to worship at the "happy-clappy" places. Young Daniel made up his mind ahead of time that he would not eat the king's food (Dan 1:8). He was prepared. He was equipped.

We must not be afraid to call spiritual poison for what it is. It is wrong. It is dangerous. It is deadly. Recognize why things are wrong. Recognize the danger. Don't be recommending books that are dripping with poison and error. Don't put a "like" on Facebook to things that God doesn't like, whether it's a picture, post or comment. I've seen far too many Christians reposting articles that are laced with bad language. Shame on us. Some have even said, "It's a good article, with a few bad words." Would you hand a child a cookie and tell his mom, "It's a good cookie with a few drops of poison." Beware...beware...beware.

Some have made Christians so nice that saying anything negative is liken to cussing to them. Let's be real. The world is dangerous, especially to Christians. There are many traps and dangers out there. Recognize trouble and beware of it.

We can be safe but we must remain Biblical and be street smart. That's the key. Some, even on God's side of things, don't get it. They muddy the water and dilute the message. They are doing more harm than good. Be Biblical. Be true to the message and the word. And, be street smart. Keep your eyes open. Be watching. Satan's out there. He will use anything and anyone to get you.

With Christ, you can succeed. With Christ, you can make it. Keep your eyes open and follow the Savior.