



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 # 1653

Ephesians 4:20-24 ***"But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which is the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."***

Our verses today, one long sentence that makes up five verses, details the transformation of a disciple of Jesus. Conversion is much more than adding "church" to one's schedule. It's a change from the inside out. We might say, a person has re-wired his thinking. He has "laid aside" the old self. The old self is what got him in trouble. The old self was sinful and rebellious. The old self did what the old self wanted to do. The next verse, verse 25, repeats this principle, "therefore, laying aside falsehood..."

In these verses Paul states, "you lay aside the old self." This is not something that happens magically nor miraculously. This is not something that God does. YOU lay aside the old self. This comes down to the choices we make. The Ephesians were being reminded, just as we must be, that they had made a commitment to Christ. Gone are the old ways, the old thinking and the old self. They must purposely choose Christ.

In all of this, we find that interesting expression, "But you did not learn Christ this way." If they had learned anything about Christ, it is that we are to be holy like He is holy. We are to put on Christ. We are to be conformed to His image. You did not learn Christ this way. That very expression illustrates part of the problem today. Folks simply have not learned Christ and those that have, have not learned the truth about Christ. Partying hard on Friday nights and then sitting in a church pew on Sunday isn't something that we have learned from Christ, at least, not from the N.T. pages. Being selfish and demanding at home and then singing about the love of Christ is not the way we learn Christ, at least, not from the N.T. Cutting dishonest business deals, shading the truth, distorting the story about others is not the way we learned Christ, at least not from the N.T.

(OVER)

In the following verses Paul addresses the topics of honesty, anger, our language, bitterness, slander, wrath, and clamor. Learning about Christ, the correct way, the Biblical way, affects our behavior. There is a bridge to what we know about Jesus and how we behave. Our choices, our attitudes all reflect what we know and what we believe about Jesus. In Christ, we learn compassion, kindness, forgiveness, love and grace. Those qualities change our home life. Those principles affect our relationships with others. They mold our manner of life in business.

The problems that many have in failing to let their light shine and in being godly examples is directly connected to what they have learned about Jesus. The Bible isn't a book of facts that we learn to pass a test. Learning Jesus, changes us. It reshapes our thinking and our hearts. It opens our eyes. To know Jesus is to repel prejudice. To know Jesus is to be like Jesus. One doesn't really know Jesus, when they are walking the opposite way of Christ. This is the point Paul is making to the Ephesians.

So, what this brings us back to is that instead of so often thumping about these problem areas, such as, unforgiving hearts and language issues, we ought to know Christ better. To know Christ is to know how we ought to walk and behave. Instead of just showing the facts about where and what Jesus did, we need to raise the hood and look inside and see the compassion of Jesus. We need to see how Jesus saw things. We need to see what impressed Jesus. We need to see Jesus.

To know Christ is to know what He is like. It is to know what He wants. It is to know what pleases Him. Uncontrolled anger, abusive language, dishonesty, lying, sour attitudes, unforgiving hearts illustrates that a person doesn't really know Christ. Jesus never did those things. Jesus wasn't like that. Jesus would have no part in that. Yet, to call myself a Christian, and to live that way, shows that I do not know Jesus. To know Jesus, Paul shows, will be reflected in our choices and behavior.

You did not learn Christ this way sums up the situation. If you learned anything about Christ, you would lay aside the old man, because the old man is lost and not pleasing to God. If you learned anything about Christ, you will change. You will put on the new man.

This all begins with Christ. What do you know about Jesus? The more Jesus, the better I become. The more Jesus, the more I put aside the old ways. The more Jesus, the more I look like Him.

More, more, more about Jesus-great song. Great principle.

Roger Shouse