



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 # 1863

Romans 16:9 "Greet Urbanus our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys are beloved."

Common to most of Paul's writings are greetings found at the end of his letters. Romans is the longest. Thirty names are listed. Most of these names are long and hard for us to pronounce. It is easy to fly through this section and not think much about it. But there are lessons here.

A common expression with these names is the word "fellow." We find "fellow worker," and "fellow prisoner." Paul recognized the great sacrifices and faith of these people. He acknowledged that some had "risked their own necks," and others were "outstanding among the apostles." He refers to some as "Beloved" and others as "choice."

Paul understood the great lesson that he could not do what he did on his own. There were others all around him that helped him, supported him and worked with him. That is a great lesson for all of us, especially we preachers. All of us have a team around us that allows us to do our work so well. These are the folks that take care of the equipment, the recordings, the live streaming, the mics and sound system, clean the baptistry, make CD's, keep the copier full of toner and paper and make it so easy for us to do our jobs efficiently.

Like Paul, we need to praise those who do their jobs well. They need to know that we recognize what they do and that we appreciate their efforts in helping where they can. A congregation involves a bunch of people who are all busy doing what they can. There are teachers who teach Bible classes. There are shepherds who work with the sheep. There are deacons who serve. There are folks visiting hospitals. There are cards of encouragement being mailed. There are meals being taken to people. No one family can do all of this. It's too much.

Often, and most times, many of these things are being done behind the scenes and few realize it. I dropped in to visit someone in the hospital this week. As I was leaving, here came a family from church. They were doing what they do so well, just dropping by to encourage someone. It is easy to think that no one is doing things, but they are. There are lots of things being done. It's just not published and no fan fare is made about it.

We can ruin the good we do by tooting our own horn. Wanting some praise for doing what we ought to do sours what we have done. God knows. That's all that matters. This is not a contest about who can do the most. It's simply a matter of those with big hearts who are seizing upon an opportunity to serve. Some are better at this than others. Some have open eyes more than others. Some have the time more than others. Don't ruin good by complaining about others. Just do what you can do.

(OVER)

A congregation is similar to a family. When everyone is pitching in and doing what they can, even the little ones, the work load doesn't seem so bad and everyone feels needed and a part of what is going on. It's when mom does everything and the rest of the family is chilling out with their phones while mom cooks, cleans, does laundry, pays the bills-she feels overwhelmed, exhausted and at the end of her rope and the rest are oblivious to what is going on. At home is where we first learn to serve. It is at home that parents need to start teaching little ones to take their dinner plate over to the sink when they are done. It's at home that they learn to make their beds, pick up their rooms and put their toys away. They need to do this without pay. Does mom get paid to clean the house? Learning to serve and help out others is a life long endeavor. As that child grows and becomes an adult, then they will continue to look for opportunities to serve.

It's hard to read Romans 16 and not think of two obvious thoughts:

First, who would be on our list of people who have helped us through the years? Who has been there for us spiritually? Who helps us now? Have you thought about that? Have you thanked them and the Lord for what they have done? We probably wouldn't be where we are today, without the help of others.

Secondly, would we be on anyone's list? Have we been a "fellow" worker? Have we jumped in and helped others? Would others look back and be thanking God for what we have done?

I can't help but wonder if this is one of the reasons why we find so many names in Romans 16. Outside of the Roman church who would have known these people? Would they have been known in Jerusalem? By the third century, who would have known them? Here we are all these hundreds of years later and we really do not know these people. Yet, God wanted these names in His book. He wanted all generations to know about what these folks did. Could it have been as an encouragement for us in our times to realize that we have been helped and we need to help.

We are all in this together. Sometimes we forget this. Sometimes congregations seem to be in competition with each other. Sometimes we preachers can be jealous of the good others are doing. Let's not forget that we all cheer for the same team and we want everyone in the kingdom to do well. The glory goes to the Lord.

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