



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 # 1925

Ezekiel 18:20 "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself."

It's raining here today. It's raining hard and it's going to rain all day. We are finally getting what's left of Hurricane Harvey. Our rains will be nothing like Texas. We will not have floods like Texas did. Yet, all these days later, we are experiencing what's left of that massive and destructive hurricane.

That took me to our verse today. The prophet is showing in this chapter a series of generations. One does well and one does not do well. The choices of each person brings blessings or curses from Heaven. Ezekiel is showing the value of responsibility. We can't ride into Heaven on the coattails of someone else's faith. I know a man who regularly reminds me that his dad preached. But I don't think dear ole' dad would be very pleased with the choices that his son is currently making. He's a mess. Boasting about the goodness of our parents doesn't give us a pass for our wrong choices. The person who sins will die. That's Ezekiel's point. Responsibility falls upon the person who makes those choices. We do not inherit sin. Nor, do we inherit righteousness. We must all walk by faith in the Lord. That's the principles being taught here.

But today it's raining. There is an impact both sin and righteousness has upon others. While other people are not responsible for the choices that we have made, our choices will have an effect upon their lives. We sometimes call these the consequences. There are consequences of sinful living and there are consequences of living righteously. The rains from a week old hurricane can still impact areas far away from where the hurricane hit.

So, let's look at both sides of this.

The consequences of a sinful life, a life lived without Jesus Christ. The first observation will be noted in the person who has chosen to live that way. His language, his attitude, his dress, his habits all reflect a life without God. He lives for self. He isn't thankful, forgiving or serving. That's the immediate. That's the person who has chosen to live that way. But the consequences are seen all around him.

His influence isn't goodness. As Jesus tells us to let our light shine and to do good works that the Father may be glorified, this won't happen to the person living without Christ. He may in some emergencies, such as we witness in Texas, help others who are in an emergency, but what happens when the emergency is over? Does he continue to serve? He doesn't lead people to goodness. He doesn't bring the best out of people. The negative, the wrong, the sinful is what surrounds him.

(OVER)

His family suffers. They grow up not knowing God. The only time they hear God's name is when it is blasphemed. Bibles are never opened. Prayers are never said. Worship is never attended. They may claim to believe, but they live as atheists. The children tend to be on the rougher side of things. At an early age, they are cussing. They only respect authority when they must. They grow up learning to use people and get what they want.

His choices further sins. Have you ever wondered why there is so much alcohol and so many raunchy movies? This is what people want. Businesses are driven by profits. If people didn't buy these things, then companies would stop making them. There is a demand. There is a market for things that are wrong. The porn industry is huge. Why? Money is being made. This is the consequences of a life without Christ.

Why is there so much hatred and prejudice these days? This doesn't come from folks following Jesus. It comes from hearts that have no direction and no teaching. This is a consequence of life without Jesus. The world becomes darker, meaner and less safe. The more that ignore Jesus, the more these things grow. Speeches, laws and politicians will not change these things. Only Jesus. This is the rain that comes from hurricanes. The man who chooses to ignore Jesus will be punished. But by his choices, others have been touched and affected.

The consequences of a righteous life. There are consequences. Walking with Jesus is a blessing and it is a blessing to others.

First, the home is made better. Love, fairness, truth, accountability, and forgiveness are found in a home that is led by righteous parents. The prodigal came home because he knew the nature of his father. The servants were treated well. Are the homes of righteous people perfect? No. Do they have bumps in their marriages? Yes. Do their kids make wrong choices? Yes. But goodness is the standard for the home. The attitudes are different. The language is different. What is expected is different. No back talking to anyone.

Second, Sundays are special in the homes of the righteous. It's the day the family gathers with the church to worship God. Everyone is expected to be there. Singing, praying, compliments, helping and serving come from hearts that follow the Lord. The mood is different. There is genuine care for others.

Third, because of the influence of a righteous man, there is an atmosphere of goodness even at work. His influence can keep meetings from being hostile and ugly. His tone keeps office gossip minimal. He is noted for his hard work and his honest work. It raises the bar among others.

Fourth, he is known in the community as one you can count upon. His words and his integrity have been shown to be true and honest. He is liked by others. He is the baseball coach that talks to the kid who has trouble. He is parent who sticks around and helps after school meetings. He picks up trash in the neighborhood, simply because it's the right thing to do.

There are consequences of our choices, not just with God but in all of life. We are leaving footprints. Others will remember us and know us for what we have chosen in life. Long after we are gone, people will remember what we have done. We leave examples to follow or we leave a trail of messes for others to deal with.

It's raining here today. This is the consequences of a destructive hurricane several days ago. There are always consequences-good or bad.

Roger Shouse (used by permission)