



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)

May 20, 2018

Jump Start # 2080

Hosea 7:16 "They turn, but not upward, they are like a deceitful bow; their princes will fall by the sword because of the insolence of their tongue. This will be their derision in the land of Egypt."

God is describing a nation that has potential for God's help, forgiveness and blessings. But rather than trust God, they have made alliances with other nations and have not followed God. The verses leading up to this illustrate this so well:

- They have neither returned to the Lord their God, nor have they sought Him, for all this (10)
- Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me! Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me. (13)
- They do not cry to Me from their heart (14)
- They devise evil against Me (15)

Our verse today, concludes these thoughts. They turn, it says, but not upward. That's a great expression. People turn for many reasons. We might call this turning process repentance. However, repentance is more than simply turning or stopping wrong.

For instance, a person may stop the hard partying, drinking and drugs because it's killing his health. Literally. He'll stop, but he may not replace it with anything good. He hasn't filled his heart with Christ. He has stopped the bad, which is wonderful, but he hasn't turned upward.

Someone else may stop bad behavior because they are threatened by home or work. They've missed so much work that they are about to get fired. They stop the bad behavior that is keeping them away from work. Others might be told to straighten up or else they are kicked out of the house. Parents might have to do this. A spouse may have to do this. A person realizing that the worse is about to happen may stop the bad behavior simply because he does not want to sleep on the streets or see his marriage end. He turns, but not upward.

Yet, another stops bad behavior because he was arrested and now sits in a jail cell. He is unable to continue his bad behavior. His turning was forced upon him by the state. While in jail, he may decide to stop doing what put him there. He may turn, but again, it may not be an upward turn.

(OVER)

Godly sorrow, as Paul told the Corinthians, leads to salvation. **2 Cor. 7:9,10** It begins with an inward turning. A person turns to God. The prodigal got up and returned home. His turning was upward. Little Zacchaeus, promised to no longer cheat or defraud people. He turned upward.

The upward turn is more than being nice. It's more than stopping bad behavior. It's filling your heart with Jesus Christ. The upward turn is looking to God and following His ways. The upward turn invites God into our lives and results in a life that becomes spiritual, godly and righteous. New way of seeing things. New definitions of what is important in life. New perspectives. New goals. Real hope. And, with all of that a better person.

The Ephesian and Colossian letter details the old man being put away and the new man taking ownership of our heart. Without this upward turn, we can change the exterior things, but it remains the same ole' place. Same thinking. Same values. Same attitudes. Same heart.

Too much emphasis is placed upon changing exterior things. More laws. More rules. More legislation. More people hired to watch. More exterior things. All of those things will not change the fact that some people are mean and they hate. All of those things won't make people be nice. It's turning, but it's not turning upward.

This is why we speak of words such as conversion, a change. This is why Jesus said we must deny ourselves if want to be his disciple. This is why Paul declared, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. Upward turning.

Stopping bad behavior doesn't bring forgiveness nor an assurance that things will get any better. Some simply go from real bad to not so bad. Yet, they remain bad. It's the upward part that we all need. It's getting up and coming home to God as that prodigal did.

The way of the cross leads home, we sing. Are you turning upward? It'll make a difference in your heart and in your walk with the Lord.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)
