



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 # 2148

Ephesians 4:27 "and do not give the devil an opportunity."

Our verse today comes from a pair of verses about anger. It is found in a setting of "do nots". Do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. And, our verse, do not give the devil an opportunity. When angry, we often don't think as we should and we can be consumed with the cause of anger and become blinded to the big picture.

Today, our attention is drawn to this third statement, "do not give the devil an opportunity." In essence, don't help the devil out. Don't hand the devil a key to your heart. This idea expands far beyond the topic of anger. Stop helping the enemy. Stop handing the devil a weapon to be used on you.

First, we know, but we sometimes fail to realize that the devil isn't our friend. Worse, he doesn't care about you at all. He doesn't care that he trashes your heart and leads you into all kinds of trouble. He doesn't care. He doesn't care that there are serious consequences connected to temptation. He doesn't care that what happens may lead to a divorce in your marriage. You may have to move out of your house. You may have to sell the house. Your kids will now have visitation rights every other weekend. Their world is turned upside down. The devil doesn't care. He doesn't care that his temptations may lead to serious, life long addictions. He doesn't care that drugs, alcohol or, porn may be a part of your life for decades. He doesn't care that you may lose your job because of that. He doesn't care if you get arrested. He doesn't care if you hurt the people who are nearest to you. He doesn't care if you are ruined financially. He doesn't care if your reputation is tarnished. He doesn't care if fellowship among brethren is withdrawn from you. He doesn't care that you blame others. And, he certainly doesn't care that you may lose your soul eternally. He simply doesn't care about you. There is no fondness. There is no tenderness. There is no love. There is no wishing for the best. There is no wanting you to succeed. He will lie to you. He will twist things. He will use people. He will promise things that he cannot keep. He is dishonest, untrustworthy and a liar. And, yet, far too many times, we will open the door to our hearts and allow him in. He is more dangerous than a snake and he is worse than cancer. And, once he is in, only Christ can get him out.

Who would have ever thought that a little anger, a little flirting, a little arrogance, a little greed, could play right into his hands. He smiles every time a church splits. He laughs every time someone walks away from God. He claps with excitement, every time some fool dishonors God or the Bible on a blog. He knows better and more than most of us about who God is and the power of God's word. He loves it when professors trash the word of God before a classroom of students. He hopes the credentials of the professor is more impressive to these foolish hearts than the God of Heaven is.

(OVER)

The devil isn't our friend.

Second, we help the devil, the enemy, every time we dishonor God, disobey God, or ignore God. Satan gets a foot hold and he gains more ground, each time we do this. Satan loves it when we fuss with our brethren in Christ. He gets another chance to score. He loves it when we are just too busy to open the Bible. Too busy to read God's word, but not too busy to watch TV. He loves it when we forget to pray. Not too busy to send a text, check our email, read some useless post on Facebook, but no time to talk to the eternal God of Heaven who made us and the one we will stand before in judgment. Satan will throw excuses at us to miss worship. Worship is dangerous to Satan. There we are surrounded by people who love God. There the word of God is studied in detail. Praying, preaching and praising God takes place. Folks leave encouraged. Folks leave committed. Worship is powerful. So, Satan will work it out for you to stay up late on Saturday night, so you are tired and sleepy in worship. He'll work it out for you to oversleep. The dog will get sick. The kids won't be able to find their shoes. Reasons after reasons to stay home. Someone invites you to the lake. It's a great day to go to the lake. Satan smiles. Your child has baseball practice, on a Sunday morning! You don't want him to sit on the bench for missing a practice, so you skip a Sunday. Satan smiles. Your mom calls and she needs you. Another reason to miss worship. Satan is great at arranging these things on a Sunday morning. He knows.

Third, we help the enemy, the devil, when we don't listen to our conscience. Our conscience, if governed by the Bible, is a wonderful reminder of what we ought to do. There was a saying long ago, "Don't listen to your conscience," that's not good advice. You should, under specific conditions. Your conscience is like a watch. It's great if it's working and set to the right time. A watch that is set to London time, won't help much where I live. It's not set correct. However, one that is working and set correctly, is of great benefit.

You're with some people, and they get talking about someone who isn't there. Something juicy about that person pops in your head. It's mean and it's not nice, but you want to top all the other stories. Immediately, a thought crosses your mind, this is gossip and I shouldn't repeat this. I help the enemy when I ignore my conscience and repeat what I shouldn't. We get upset and we feel like letting someone have it, a thought crosses our mind, Jesus wouldn't do this. When we ignore that thought, and chew someone out, we help the enemy out. When we hear about someone doing well, and it just makes us envious and jealous, and we start picking them apart, a thought crosses our mind, rejoice with those who rejoice. But we ignore that thought, and we trash the person, either in our hearts or before others, you have helped the enemy. Even during worship, Satan is there. A certain song leader gets up to lead, and we think, "Not this guy. He can't lead." Rather than focusing upon the God we are praising, we help the enemy destroy our worship by thinking about the wrong things. The same could be said about who is preaching, who is teaching a class. We can help the enemy by ignoring our conscience.

What can we do? Stop helping the enemy! Get your mind, heart and soul in the right place with God. Realize how sneaky, destructive and evil Satan is. Get close to God and stay there. Surround yourself with godly people and fill your heart and mind with the things God loves.

Stop helping the enemy!

Roger Shouse
