



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 # 2165

Luke 2:30 "And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid Mary; for you have found favor with God."

Our verse today is the announcement of Gabriel about the coming birth of Jesus. Mary of Nazareth was chosen. The virgin Mary is how the Catholic doctrine refers to her. She was, until Jesus was born and then Mary had other children. The Bible names them. She followed Jesus throughout his ministry and sadly saw her son's death upon the cross.

Mary was not the mother of God. That statement makes no sense. God is eternal. If God has always been, then how could such have a mother? How could someone be before eternity? Mary was the instrument to carry the Jesus clothed in a physical form.

A few thoughts about our verse today:

First, God chose Mary. There wasn't a contest or a screening process. Just as God chose Abraham, David, the apostles and other leaders, He can look upon the heart of an individual. God knew what He was looking for and He saw it in Mary. God sees. God found Mary in Nazareth. There would have been dozens and dozens of Jewish girls about Mary's age. She stood out. She was the choice of Heaven. Was Mary perfect, meaning, without sin? No. She needed the saving blood of Jesus as we all do. Finding favor with God does not mean perfection. Today, we'd pick Mary's life apart. We'd find the mistakes and failures. We'd be naming her sins. God didn't do that. He praised her by saying that He had found favor with her.

Second, Mary pleased God. Many modern scholars believe that Mary was young, possibly a teenager, getting that idea that Jewish girls typically married young. If this be true, it is just another example of young hearts that can and do follow the Lord. The three Jewish youths in the fiery furnace, young Timothy, young Joseph, all remind us that young people can and do please the Lord. Don't give young people a pass and excuse a lack of interest, and a lack of spirituality because they are young. Young and dumb doesn't catch the eye of God. Young and foolish is found in Proverbs. Young and rebellious, is often the spirit of college campuses. Looking for some reason to get out of classes to protest, burn, tear down and be destructive. Mary, found favor with God. That one statement tells us much. She had spent time worshipping God in the synagogue. That pleases God. She had followed the Law of God. That pleases God. She had prayed to God. That pleases God. Her heart was focused and tender towards God. And, that caught God's eyes.

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Third, up to this point in the Bible record, Mary is unknown. She wasn't chosen because she was a prophetess. She wasn't leading the nation. She hadn't written some article that was causing reform to sweep through the countryside. She appears to have been a quiet, humble person who was simply living her life with a view towards Heaven. She wasn't hoping that God would pick her. She hadn't done anything special that caused God to notice. Her life, her character, her heart, was this way. Mary was this way. She seems surprised and shocked with the news from the angel. Sometimes a person will do something to be noticed or if they think that there is a chance that they could be chosen, they will put on the good behavior for a while. I don't see this with Mary. Had Jesus not come to earth at that point, Mary would have continued to live a life that found favor with God. She chose to please the Lord. That was her ambition and goal. That was Mary.

Joseph, who later marries Mary is called a righteous man. I don't see Mary putting on a show to win Joseph's favor. In other words, in our times, I go to church with you, until the "I do," then I start the "I don'ts." This wasn't a game with Mary. This wasn't to get in good favor with a Jewish family. How can you say this, you ask? Because she found favor with God. The Lord sees through all the motives, intentions within our hearts. He knows. He knows when we are serious and when we are trying to impress others. He knows when we truly love Him and when we are just trying to look good. Remember the Pharisees and the washing of the inside of the cup first? Jesus could see right through their motives and intentions. On the outside they looked pretty good. However, on the inside they were a mess. Most would not have seen the inside for a while. Jesus did immediately. He knew. So, when God says that Mary has found favor with Him, it tells us that the Lord saw Mary as being a genuine believer. She was serious about her walk with the Lord.

Finally, Mary is not the first, nor the last to find favor with the Lord. In the parable of the talents, two of the men found favor with their master. Well done, good and faithful, was the response of the master. Paul found favor with the Lord. Those suffering saints in Revelation found favor with the Lord. Hebrews 11 is a chapter of dozens who were approved of by God. Over and over our Bibles give us examples of men and women, young and old, who walked faithfully with the Lord. They made God their choice. They often suffered because of their choices. And, today, the kingdom is filled with those who are loving, pleasing and serving the Lord. They are putting God before all things. They are raising their families to be moral, godly and caring. They worship regularly. They are generous. They are forgiving. They are modern examples of righteousness, hope and faithfulness to the Lord. These spiritual giants come in all ages. They are active helping others to know the Lord. They are the backbone of every congregation. They truly hide themselves behind the cross of Christ.

Mary found favor in the Lord. You have too.

Roger Shouse
