



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)

January 6, 2019

Jump Start # 2199

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Being a Christian is not a passive, non-involvement, sideline spectator concept. It's not like being part of an organization which as long as you pay your annual dues, you get some special discounts, and that's about all that is required of you. When we view Christianity this way, we miss the essence of what it is all about. There are three aspects of Christianity that can be defined with the letter "B."

First, a Christian is a Believer. He believes in Christ and the Gospel that Jesus stands behind. He loves the Lord with all that he is. This belief is active. His choices are shaped by this belief. He prays often to God, knowing that God hears him. He loves reading God's word, knowing that it will draw him closer to the Lord. Worship is a welcome and joyous event that he looks forward to each week. He knows God is. All around he sees the work of God. He understands that each person is made in the image of God. What a wonderful experience to know God and to know that God loves you.

Second, a Christian is a Becomer. He has changed or become. His beliefs have led to a change in his thinking and his behavior. His character has changed and now he is holy, like Jesus. He has changed his attitude and now he is kind, generous and forgiving, like Jesus. His heart has been touched and now he takes on the role of a servant, like Jesus. He puts others first. He thinks about others. He seeks ways to help others. The Christian realizes that reading the Bible is unlike anything else he reads. There is a power and a motivation to become what the Bible says. It is transforming and the Christian longs to be more and more like the Lord. The outlook of a person changes when he becomes a Christian. He may not know what tomorrow will bring, but he does know who will shape tomorrow and that is the Lord.

Third, a Christian is a Belonger. He belongs to others who have the same heart, faith and desire to walk with the Lord. He is part of a fellowship of believers. This is where our verse fits in today. There is a fellowship with others who are walking in the light. We become a part of the family of God. We are related to one another through the blood of Jesus. And, although our pasts may be different, we have intersected and now are connected through faith. We worship together. We pray together. We are connected together. We are family.

There is something special about being in a fellowship. It helps you to think of others than just yourself. It reminds us of things we can do for each other. It helps us to know that we do not journey alone. Shared prayers. Hands joined together to help in the work. Blended voices in worship. Pooled money to help support and further the kingdom. There is strength, encouragement and love flowing through a spiritual fellowship.

(OVER)

Now, herein lies a common problem. Some don't seem to like others. We want to hand pick who can be in the family of God. And if somehow some get in that we don't particularly like, we'll just ignore them and avoid them. Have you ever noticed this in a church? Some seem to be left out. Some seem to be alone. Even in a big congregation, it's possible to not fit in. Sometimes it's the old established crowd that has been together for decades. As the church grows, here comes new people. They don't know your history nor your connections to others. There is an unspoken feeling that "those new people," aren't like us. They haven't put in the time like we have. They haven't held this place together like we have. And, here they are, riding in the wave of all that we have done. And, that's all it takes for some to do what they can to make the new people always feel new. The fellowship isn't truly there.

It can be like siblings in a family. They never asked to have a sister or another brother. But here they are. And, although they live under the same roof and have the same last name, they can be very different. And that difference is all it takes to irritate and bug the others. We don't pick our siblings and we don't pick our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Our passage reminds us of an important fellowship principle. If a person is walking as the Lord did, in the light, then fellowship and acceptance is demanded and expected if we want to be right with the Lord. Just because we don't like someone is no reason to treat them as if they are not in Christ. If God has accepted them, then so should we. All of us have unusual quirks about us. We don't see it in ourselves and would never admit to that, but we do. Some of us can really be annoying. We can be nosey. We can be loud. We can be so quiet that we are not noticed. Some lean to the negative side of things. Some ask far too many questions. Some like old ways. Some like new ways. Some are always talking. Some seem to know the answer to everything. Some love to share their opinions, even when it's not asked. Some come over to your home because you invited them and then they never seem to go home. Others, you've invited a dozen times and they never come. Some talk out in a Bible class without raising their hand. Others answer every question and do not allow others to answer. Some can't seem to park their car straight. Others, have to back into a space, every time. Some are there as soon as the church doors are open. Others, no matter when services begin, are always five to ten minutes late, every time. Some seem to talk to only certain people. Some like to hug. Some don't like hugs. Put all of this in a big pot and stir it up an couple of times and this is what is found in most congregations. It's people who are different than we are. It reminds me of homemade stew. There's some carrots in there with a few potatoes. You'll find some chunks of meat and a little onion and lots of broth. Each those are different, but cooked together and stirred up just right, it can make a mighty tasty meal. Instead of trying to make a carrot taste like a potato, we enjoy how they blend together and each add what the other couldn't to make the stew so good.

The same ought to work in our fellowship. Instead of trying to change others to my liking and being like me, we need to enjoy how we blend together. Each of us adding what maybe the other couldn't and together we make a church warm, friendly, loving and pleasing to the Lord.

How do we like those we don't like? Stop focusing upon the things that annoy you. Look what they bring. Look at what they add. Understand the way you feel towards them may be the very way others feel about you. We are all unique and different. Realize that the Lord loves each of us and all of us. Be thankful that they are on this side of the kingdom. Be thankful that they are saved and not lost. Be thankful that through them you can learn things and be what the Lord wants.

Believers, Becomers, Belongers-that's the makeup of being a Christian.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
