



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)

April 14, 2019

Jump Start # 2304

Romans 12:2 "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Don't follow the world. Don't do what the world is doing. The world is going to end up in a different place than where we want to be. Have you noticed a mini theme this week? Do not please the world (Tues). Do not be afraid of the world (yesterday). Do not follow the world (today).

Conformity means to go along. It is to flow with the flow. Back in the 60's, many of the hippies were anti-establishment. They were against war, government, rules and about everything but drugs and free love. Paul's words were not political, but spiritual. There are Biblical reasons why we don't do everything the world does.

Happiness, fun, and self are the themes that the world follows. These themes takes the world down the road to immodesty, indecent language, materialism, greed and a life without Christ, and all that comes when one isn't following the Lord. The measurement is always shallow external things. Look how big my house is, someone declares. Look what car I'm driving. I must be doing something right, because I have all these toys surrounding me.

That thinking appeals to young people. Stuff is where it's at, we are told. The more stuff you have the better. So, you have to have the latest phone. You have to have the latest tablet. You have to have the newest and largest TV. You have to have, never seems to end. And, you have to have never seems to satisfy. You never see an ad on TV that announces, 'this is the last phone you will ever need.' Nope. That won't happen. And, the reason is that the world needs stuff. And, with stuff comes prestige, and popularity. Who wants to be the dumb kid at school who doesn't have the latest phone? Who wants to be the guy at work who doesn't watch Netflix at home? To be somebody, who have to have the latest stuff. The more stuff, the greater you are. So, stuff and status are linked together. More stuff, more status. If you want to be somebody, you better have the stuff. The latest gadgets. The newest outfits. The coolest house. The new car. And, with this status, the world bows and thinks, "I wish I had what you do." The ultimate status is the rock star athlete, movie star, or CEO who can have it all.

I was picking a friend up at the airport the other day. While waiting I noticed two massive digital signs. They were opposite of each other and you couldn't miss them. They were beautiful in color and massive in size. One had three bottles of tequila and the other was a large bottle of bourbon. I looked at those and thought, "welcome to our city, let's drink." Of all the things for people to first see, why booze? Why? Because the world believes you can't get through a day without one little drink. The world is looking for happiness and they believe alcohol is a fast way to get there.

(OVER)

Be not conformed to the world. Here's why:

First, all the stuff that the world wraps itself around neither satisfies nor does it last. Christ is coming. The world will be destroyed. All the stuff, will be no more. If it takes stuff to define me, describe me and make me happy, then I am a shallow, empty person. For the child of God, His walk with the Savior makes all the difference. It doesn't matter where he is. It doesn't matter what he's going through. It doesn't matter how tough things are, Heaven awaits him. Forgiveness, love, hope and joy-there are no price tags for that. You cannot equal those values with stuff. And, because of Jesus, worry, fear and death are nothing. The world can't handle death. The world is obsessed with fear and worry. All the stuff that the world surrounds itself with cannot properly deal with fear, worry and death. Only through Christ do we find our way out of those things.

Second, being transformed means being changed. It's allowing Christ to be the Lord of your life. It's letting the Lord dwell in you. You now live with a purpose and a plan. You have definition, not by the labels you wear, but by the Lord who is in your heart. You have crucified self and now you carry the role of a servant. You'd rather give than receive. You'd rather help than be helped. You'd rather put a smile on someone else's face than on your own face. There is an energy, a passion and a love that comes from Christ and His word that the world cannot understand. How boring sitting through church services, the world thinks. How dull must sermons be, the world thinks. Too many rules. Too many demands. Too little of self. And, off the world goes, like a three-year-old, merrily thinking that they are the best. Don't be like that. Don't follow that. Don't be conformed to that thinking. You and I were once there. We left. We left by choice. We don't ever want to go back again. What a difference Christ has made in our lives. And, there is a hope that is only found in Christ. A hope that is real. A hope that lasts. A hope that endures.

Third, not only are we not doing what the world does, we are not interested in the world liking us, agreeing with us, or what they say about us. We belong to the Kingdom of Christ. Our eyes are looking towards Him. We live as if we have one foot already in Heaven. So, there will be movies that everyone is talking about, but you. When co-workers find out that you have never seen that movie, they will think you live in a cave. That's ok. When everyone is talking about going to a certain event, and you are not, they will think you are odd, boring and have no life. When they talk about their wild weekends and the drinking and the partying and the loose living, and you show no interests in that, they will conclude that you are just one step away from being a monk. Let them think that. You don't have to find a way to fit in, because you can't. You don't have to find a way to make your faith seem "cool," because it never will be to the world. Jesus, as the world wants Him to be, cusses just a little. He plays around and flirts with the girls. He's cool with drinking. He bends the rules now and then. He's just like everyone else. That's what the world wants. But, if that be the case, why did He even come?

He's not like us. He's holy. He's pure. He's God. We don't want a Jesus like us. We are in a mess. We have trouble here. Jesus is not a more improved version of us. He's the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God. Rather than trying to make Jesus like us, that's conformity, we need to become like Jesus. That's transformation. That's re-wiring the house. That's seeing things differently. That's denying self, taking up the cross and following Him. That's discipleship. And, that is exactly what's missing in the modern churches and in the world today. It's not a hip-hop Jesus that we need. It's a world that will bow to the Savior and confess that He is both Lord and Christ. Drop the rock 'n roll in church. Don't try to be "religious" rock stars. Be followers of Jesus. Christians have never fit in the world. They didn't back then and they won't today.

This concept is hard for young people. It's also hard for us older people. The world is loud, flashy and in your face. Money talks. Stuff is impressive. But in the end, it's all superficial, fake and meaningless. What matters is not what's in the showroom, but what's in the storehouse. What matters is what's in our hearts.

The world shouts. You don't have to jump. The world demands. You don't have to follow. The world says you have to, but you don't. You follow Christ. And, if you stay at it, you'll end up where Christ is, in Heaven.

Not pleasing the world. Not afraid of the world. Not following the world. Not impressed by the world. We are not of this world, we are just a passing through.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)
