



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 26, 2019

Jump Start # 2308

Acts 17:11 "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so."

This passage is an incredible example for all of us. What happened here changed their lives. This ought to be the standard for us and when it is, it too changes our lives.

The apostle Paul was out preaching. We often call these trips his missionary journeys. Paul and Silas came to Berea. They started teaching in Jewish synagogues. They weren't teaching what the people there had been used to hearing. They were teaching about Jesus, salvation, and the church. New thoughts. New ideas. And, out of this a new example for the rest of the world.

From this passage we see:

First, they received the word. They didn't turn their backs on it. They didn't say, "That's not the way we have heard it before." Before faith can take root in our hearts, God's word must be received. Without that, faith has no substance. The difference between faith, wishing and dreaming, is that faith has a foundation in the word of God. The word of God is what supports the faith. In Jesus' story of the wise man and the foolish man, at the end of the sermon on the mount, it was the wise man who built his house upon the rock. That rock is the word of God. That rock made it possible for the house to withstand storms. That rock kept the person going. That rock held him up.

Without the word of God, folks hope, but there's nothing to that hope. Faith is built upon the promises, the trust, the assurance and the proof of God that is found throughout the word of God. They received the word.

Second, they received it with "great eagerness." That expresses their attitude. They weren't reluctant. They weren't doubting. The Bible makes sense. The Bible can be understood. One doesn't need another book to explain God's book. Creeds, by-laws and so forth, are not necessary. God's word is what will get us to Jesus. God's word is what will get us to Heaven. Through that word we come to know, believe and obey Jesus.

Some folks receive the word, but it's not with great eagerness. They receive it, almost hoping there was another option. Some receive it, but they don't like it. Some fight it, like a child being put to bed when he doesn't want to go to bed. When these things happen, we will be slow to obey. We will not have joy in our hearts. We will do it, simply because we don't want to go to Hell. Heaven or Hell are God's only options. I truly feel that some wish that there was a third option.

(OVER)

I get the impression that some would be ok not live on in eternity. If God had a third option of simply ceasing to exist after death, I think many would sign up for that. That way they could live as they wanted to without any consequences. However, there is no third option. You won't find in Heaven people who don't really want to be there. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

You can tell eager people. They are first in line. On black Friday, they are the ones who campout all night in front of a store door. They are eager. Getting up early with excitement is a sign of eagerness. Here, it's folks who are attentive to what was being preached. I see this in people's eyes as I preach. They are listening. They are looking in their Bibles. They are taking notes. They are learning. They are thinking. They are changing. God's word is powerful and it can drive out fear, doubt and worry. God's word gives us comfort and hope. God's word reassures our hearts. God's word builds confidence and courage. We can face anything, even death, when we know God is on our side and we are on His side.

Third, these folks were checking things out with the word of God. They searched the Scriptures to see whether these things were so. Several thoughts here. The Scriptures for these Bereans would be the Old Testament. Paul must have been referring to the prophecies about the Messiah and the death. Passages like Psalms 22, Isaiah 53, or Daniel's discussion about God's kingdom (Dan 2) would have been places they may have looked at. Rather than just accepting what Paul said, they checked it out. They verified it. They searched the Scriptures. If it's in the Bible, it's so.

This tells us that they understood that God's word is the answer. They didn't check the pages of what the rabbis had written. They didn't rest upon what their ancestors always believed. It was the Scriptures. If it was in the Scriptures, that meant it was right. They didn't argue with Scriptures. They didn't look for loopholes. They didn't toss their opinions into the matter. God spoke and that was it.

That spirit is missing these days. Too many want to fuss with the Bible, which really means that they are arguing with God. That's one argument that they will lose. People today place their feelings above Scriptures. I know the Bible says this, they will say, but I feel this way about that. When they do that, they do not realize that they are placing how they feel at a higher standard than God. It really doesn't matter how we feel. I may not like it. I may wish God said something different. But, realize God didn't have to write the Bible. He didn't have to send His apostles out preaching His word. He easily and rightly could have said, you messed up, good luck. You are on your own. What then? We would be lost without any hope and without ever knowing what to do. Most wouldn't have thought about being baptized on our own. We wouldn't know how to please God on our own. We'd come up with our own way of doing things. And, guess what? That's exactly what the modern church looks like today. There are so many activities, organizational levels, concepts, worship ideas that one never reads in the Bible. If you were to ask, show me where this is in the Bible? They couldn't. They don't care. They have moved past following the Bible.

The apostle Paul said, "the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil 4:9). It's a matter of following the leader. In essence, if Paul did it, we should too. If Paul didn't, why are we doing it?

They received the word. They received it with great eagerness. They received it and checked it out by the Scriptures. They became Christians. And, guess what? The same thing happens today.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)
