



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 # 2340

Genesis 3:24 "So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life."

I find our verse today very interesting. I've never really put much thought into this passage. The background is well known. The serpent spoke. Eve listened. She and Adam ate. God found them hiding. He clothed them and cursed them. And, as our verse illustrates, He drove them out of the garden. Kicked out. Banished.

Some know that feeling. They have been kicked out of school. Others were kicked out of the house. Some have been fired and were escorted out of the office building by security. It's embarrassing. It's shameful. What's missing here are apologies by Adam and forgiveness by God. There was no do overs here. There was no second chances. And, as this chapter ends, it literally becomes a brand new chapter for the lives of Adam and Eve.

Have you ever thought about what happened next?

The text tells of the birth of Cain and Abel. Sheep were raised, because that is what Abel offered. Gardens were grown, because that is what Cain offered. But what's not told is where do we go from here. Where will we live? God had chosen that when they were created in the garden. Now, they had to pick up the pieces and find a new place to live and a new life to live. There was no returning back to the garden. God didn't just drive them out, but He made it impossible for them to return. Not much is spoken about Adam after this. He lived a long time. He had children. But nothing is said about he and God. He's not named in Hebrews 11.

But this brings us to a great lesson that we often do give much thought to. How does one pick up the pieces after he has messed things up? How do you go one after you have made a real mess of things back home or in the church?

For instance:

(OVER)

- Here is a man who flirted around with women at work. One thing led to another and a sexual affair took place. He tried to hide it, but his wife found out. Now, he's divorced. He has been driven from the home. What does he do?
- Here is a preacher who got caught with some wild ideas on the internet. He gets excited about reshaping the congregation and trying some new things. He hasn't really thought these things out Biblically, nor practically. He launches them in a sermon. He pushes them as he continually becomes influenced by error. He meets resistance. The shepherds don't see nor buy into his speculations and ideas. They feel for the unity of the church, it's time for him to step down. Things don't go well. Shouting, accusations made, fingers are pointed and in the end the preacher is fired and withdraw from. He's made a mess. Others have left. He has been driven out of the pulpit. What does he do?
- Here is a teenager who keeps hanging out with the wrong crowd. One Friday night, after drinking too much alcohol, he flees from an accident. Scared he runs. The police catch up with him. He is handcuffed, arrested and off to the local jail. He's scared. His parents are furious. What does he do?
- Here is an employee in charge of payroll. Her job seems lifeless and useless. She's a wiz on the computer. A little changing of numbers here and a little there and instantly she's learned how to skim some money off the company. With that new found money, she shops on the internet. This becomes fun and exciting. She does it again and again. After several months, auditors have found her scam. The police are called. She is fired. She is arrested. Not only will she serve time in prison, but she must pay back massive amounts of money that may take her the rest of her life. What does she do?

Sadly, I could put more than one name to most of these stories. The trouble we get ourselves into is most unbelievable. Sin can take us down some dark, dark places and the consequences, which we never dream will ever catch up with us, usually do. And, simply saying, "I'm sorry," isn't enough. Divorced. Prison time. Fired and your work record ruined. Financial penalties that are staggering. What do you do?

Throughout the Bible we have read of people facing difficult circumstances and being afraid. The disciples were afraid during storms on the sea. Gideon downsized his army because many were afraid. **(Judges 7:2,3)** It's one thing to be scared to do what God wants us to, but to be driven out, kicked out, and banished because of our sins and our choices, is something totally different. Adam wasn't following God when he was kicked out of the garden. His choices, his sins resulted in being driven out. No one's fault but his. No one to blame but himself. He dug a hole that he fell in and now couldn't get out of.

What does one do? Here are a few thoughts:

First, stop the blame game. Be honest with your sins. Too often we point fingers to the church, the family or others. We blame our wives as the reason why we had the affair. That's a lie and not true. It's our choices and our sins. We blame the church, the leaders, the classes, the atmosphere, the people, for causing us to be dead in our faith. That's a lie and not true. It's our choices and our sins. It's time to look in the mirror. The mess we are in is because we put ourselves there. You'll never get back to where you need to be as long as you keep playing this foolish game.

Second, be humble. You messed up. You did. You didn't listen to God. You didn't take God seriously. That's right where Adam was. You listened to the wrong voices. You talked to serpents. You were influenced by ungodly people. You followed the wrong crowd. And, what you did certainly hasn't worked out well for you. You are banished. You are driven out. You are kicked out. It's time for help. It's time to realize that you weren't thinking. It's time to turn to God.

Third, God will allow you to return to Him and be forgiven. You must make some real changes in your life. You need to banish the people that led you away from the Lord. You need a new circle of influences and they best be the people of God. You need to worship. You need to get back into the Bible. You need to change your thinking and your ways.

For those who preach, don't be looking for another church to preach at. Not yet. You need to clear your head and build trust once again. You've made a mess and it will take time to clean all of that up.

Fourth, you need to apologize. First, to God. Second, to all that you have hurt. Not just a generic, going forward, and saying that "I've may have made some mistakes." YOU MAY HAVE? You did. You need to face the music and apologize to your wife face to face. You need to apologize to the elders face to face. You need to apologize to your boss face to face. Whom you have hurt, you need to apologize. This will be very painful. You may and probably deserve to have tons of rebuke and admonishing rain down upon you. You may need to apologize to your children for ruining their lives. Tears and tears will flow. Such is the result of sin.

Fifth, realize that you may never get things restored as they once were. You may be divorced, fired and banned from the pulpit. But that doesn't mean you sit down and quit. You pick up and do what is right to the best that you can. As a divorced person, serve the Lord. As a person fired from their job, serve the Lord. As a preacher who has been withdrawn from and fired, serve the Lord. Some may never forgive you. Some may hold this over your head the rest of your life. And, as Adam had to, you may have to move on to a new place and try a new start.

Finally, realize that we all carry scars and wounds from our sins. We all have hurt others. We all have let God down and disappointed Him. You are not the first and you will not be the last. But what we do is learn and do better. We taste the kindness of the Lord and realize that He never gives up on us. We fight and scratch our way back into righteousness. We may have to toss the computer out the window. We may have to find a job where we are not around many people. We may have to sit in the pew and not stand behind the pulpit, but we can recover. We can overcome. We can be forgiven. We can go to Heaven. And, we can honestly share our story with others so they don't have to taste the ugliness of sin as we have.

Adam was driven out. In many ways, we have too. But God allows us back. We have to change. We have to do better. We have to realize that His ways work. His ways are the best ways.

I hope these words help those who are wondering what do I do now? Satan wants you to quit. He wants you to think that you are too far gone. Broken like that prodigal, you must pick yourself up and come back home to God.

It's home where you belong.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)