



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)

August 18, 2019

Jump Start #2329

Matthew 6:8 *"Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him."*

Our verse sets the tone for the Lord's example on how to pray. Most refer to this as the "Lord's Prayer," even though there are aspects of this that He would have never said and there is no indication that He actually prayed this Himself. He was teaching the disciples. Prayer doesn't have to be long to be effective. Prayer doesn't have to be filled with words that are impressive and big to move God. Simple concepts. Simple words. To the point. Both physical concerns and spiritual concerns. That's the breakdown of the way Jesus wants us to pray.

Before giving this model of prayer, we find our verse. God knows what you need before you ask Him. Immediately, we might wonder, why then ask? If He knows, He knows. We ask, because it reminds us that blessings come from Him. We ask because we are dependent upon Him. We ask because we are His children. We ask, because God wants us to.

There is that little expression, "Your Father knows what you need." That's revealing. It's good to know. Consider:

First, what we want and what we need are not the same. Little children in a store get that confused. They will look at candy or a toy and say to their parents, "I really need that." No. They want that, but it's not what they need. The parents try to explain, but at that moment it's a lost cause. We can be like that. I need a vacation we say. I need to get away. I need a raise. I need a new car. I need and I want are not the same. God knows what we need.

Second, God knows what we need and often we do not know ourselves what we need. We need God. We need salvation. We need to worship. We need our hearts saturated with God's word. We need to be walking closely to the Lord. The fact is, many of us never realize that's what we need. And, sometimes the trials, problems and difficulties in life are the very things that turn us back home to God. The prodigal needed to come home. He needed to come home with a different attitude and spirit than what he left with. It took feeding pigs for him to get there. God knew. He didn't. God knows us better than we know ourselves.

Third, the comforts in life can be the very things that take us away from God. James tells us to consider it all joy when you encounter various trials. These trials can have positive results. These trials can lead us to where God wants us to be. We normally do not feel that way. We hate trials. We want to run from them. Trials is a nice way of saying difficulties. Problems, is another way of describing trials. They mess up our schedules. They tax our energy. They can be expensive. They take us away from a typical and normal day. We long for problem free days. Worry free vacations. Stress free work days. Traffic that runs smoothly. No lines at the check out. Kids that are behaving. Churches that are at peace. Neighbors that get along. No drama in the family. Just give us that, we think. And, if we had that, would we pray? Would we turn toward Heaven? Feeding pigs when you are hungry and desperate makes a person think. It makes us realize that our choices put us where we are. It makes you see the opportunities you wasted, and the blessings that you abused. God knows what we need. And, some days, it's a good dose of trials.

Fourth, although God knows what we need, we often do not know what each other needs. This hurts families and this hurts congregations. People feel unfulfilled. They feel empty. They feel that a purpose isn't being met. They assume that others ought to know. There are problems in their life and no one is there to talk to them about it. I've known of people who were in and out of the hospital and didn't tell anyone but later became upset because no one came to see them. God knows. We don't. This tells us that we need to be more open, transparent and communicate openly with each other. If you have a problem and you want help, let that be known. If you are struggling, don't drown in your troubles. Get help. Hanging around like a lost puppy dog and always saying, "Ok," when folks ask you how are you doing, won't get you anywhere. Talk to the shepherds. Talk to the preacher. People don't know what you need unless you tell them. And, even though God knows, we are still supposed to pray to Him. No one can read your mind. No one can know that you are having a tough time unless you express that to others.

Finally, God provides what we need. We need salvation and God sent a Savior. We need guidance and direction and God provided His word. We need examples and God surrounds us with shepherds and godly brethren. We need teaching and God provides a church. We need encouragement and God gives us brethren. We need something to do and God has a kingdom that we can be busy with. Never does God say, "Figure it out." He doesn't say that because we'd probably get it wrong. Never does God say, "Try and find Me," because we couldn't. After Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the garden, it was God who showed up looking for them. It was God who dealt with the serpent. It was God who provided the animal skins for them to wear. God knows what you need and God provides it.

Sometimes we are not satisfied with what God provides and we feel that what God has given won't do the job. So, some think we need something beyond God's word. Some think we need some kind of organization beyond God's church. Some think we need to make some super structure to accomplish what God wants done. Rather than just being busy with what God has provided, some are always trying to change things. God knows what we need and God has provided what works. We need to trust God in all of this.

God knows...I'm glad he does. I can't imagine what our prayers would be like if we didn't even know what to ask Him. He knows. He guides us. He helps us. He provides for us. He is there for us. And, still, some would complain that God hasn't done enough.

God is so good...He is so good to me.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)