



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 # 2349

Philippians 4:9 "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."

Saturday night, it was off to the symphony for us. Beethoven's ninth was the premiere piece that was played. It was amazing! I noticed something. It was not unique to that night's performance. In fact, they have done it every time I have been there. But it clicked with me this time.

All the orchestra is seated before the performance begins. All, except for one. He's the first chair violin, the concert maestro. He enters on his own. He stands before the orchestra. He points to an oboe player. One note is played. The maestro plays that same note on his violin. The entire orchestra then plays that one note. They are all on the same note. They are all in tune. They are all together. The conductor then comes out and the concert begins.

But it's that moment of everyone being on the same note that impressed me. Together. Blended together. The N.T. uses expressions such as one mind, one body, one voice to define the unity that is to be among us. But even before unity can take place, there is that need and that moment of each of us to be matching what is played by the maestro.

Our verse today is reflection of that concept. Notice the words: learned, received, heard and seen-it is a matter of following the leader. It's a matter of each of us playing that same note as the concert maestro. Paul was only following what the Lord had first given to him. There are some great lessons for us:

First, within our faith, forget the idea of being original, different, a trend setter, a pioneer, a maverick, or in the words of the old Star Trek, "going beyond where no man has gone before." That spirit isn't following Christ. That spirit wants to be alone, different and unique. That spirit wants to go in a direction that no one else is going. That may sound great in music, or fashion, but it doesn't work Biblically. We have a maestro to follow. We have a Lord to follow. I can only imagine what would have happened at our concert if one guy decided to play a different note than everyone else. Heads would have turned and then, his head probably would have rolled.

This is something we preachers must keep before us. We want to be fresh. We want to teach things that stick. But to be looking for something that no one else has ever found, or to teach something that generations of great preachers have never seen before is not only dangerous, but it invites error.

(OVER)

Rather than digging and digging for hours to find some rare concept that will bring new light to one of the Lord's teachings, why not just teach it the way He gave it? Why not teach the way He wanted it taught? Why try to be different? Why try to be so special? Is it the page of the Bible that you are pointing to, or your superior intellect that you want people to notice?

Second, it's easy to catch something that doesn't sound right once you have learned how things ought to sound. Hours and hours of studying error is not as valuable as is hours studying truth. Learn how things are supposed to be. Learn how things ought to sound. Then, when you hear something different, you'll recognize it. It will stand out. It will cause you to take note and investigate. The Bereans were searching the Scriptures to find out if what they were hearing was so. When a person doesn't know what something is supposed to sound like, then they won't know a true sound from a strange sound.

Third, it is God who identifies what is proper and pleasing to Him. It is not up to us to determine what we like, but rather, to follow what God likes. Among us, we may have all different kinds of likes. We have different places that we like to go out to eat. We have different tastes in movies, music and sports. Some like antiques. Some like things modern. Some like slow. Some like fast. We are not in the position to determine what that first note ought to be. What I like may not be what you like. And, worse, what I like may not be good, right or even helpful. God determines.

Paul's thoughts from our passage is to imitate him. If Paul did it, then we ought to. If he didn't, then we shouldn't. Nothing original here. Nothing cutting edge, progressive, or new. No one of a kind, with this stuff.

Fourth, what that leads to is a uniformity without influence. In our house, my wife is the music. I love music, but I cannot understand it, nor read it, nor carry a tune. Not me. But I can find middle C on our piano. There is a trick to that. I know that trick. Middle C on our piano will sound the same as middle C on your piano (assuming everything is in tune). Middle C in America, is the same as middle C for Beethoven in Vienna more than one hundred years ago. Middle C is middle C. It's the same for mathematics. It's the same for the principles of science. So a group of Christians meeting in Africa on a Sunday morning, will in essence look like a group of believers in America on a Sunday morning. They may have never heard of each other, but there is a similarity. They may dress differently, speak different languages, but they will sing hymns on that Sunday. They will pray on that Sunday. They will share the Lord's Supper on that Sunday. They will preach God's word that Sunday. How is it, that they will be doing the same things? It's like that middle C on a piano. If each is strictly following the Bible, then worship will be patterned the same. There is a sameness to what they are doing, even though they never meet nor know of each other. They are following the Bible, and that Bible will lead them the same way.

Years ago we got to hear a Mozart concert in Vienna. It started the same as the concert the other night in Louisville. The maestro played the oboe note and everyone else played the same note. Following the Bible today, ought to make us look like the original Christians in the book of Acts. There is nothing magically about this. When each follows what Jesus did, then we will be the same. Our differences come not from following Jesus, but from not following Jesus. We start playing different notes and before long chaos abounds and that's what the religious community looks like today. Is it possible for all of us to be the same? Certainly. The question arises, who will play that first note which we all will follow? If not Jesus, then who? You? Me? Someone else? Trouble begins when we fail to allow Jesus to be the certain figure in all that we do.

We can call all of this Biblical authority, or follow the leader, or sticking to a pattern, or simply allowing Jesus to be the head of the church. Jesus said, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?" Good question Jesus. Why do you call someone the maestro and not play the opening note that he's playing?

Free spirits and rebels don't do well in an orchestra. They also do not do well in the kingdom.

It's amazing what great spiritual lessons one can pick up at a concert.

Roger Shouse