



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)

December 1, 2019

Jump Start # 2280

Acts 10:31 "and he *said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.'"

I was reading a book about the first men who went to the moon. This year is the 50th anniversary of that extraordinary trip in space. It was a masterful accomplishment of engineering and science. There was a lot of excitement when Neil Armstrong took those first steps upon the lunar surface. As Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon surface, pictures were taken, soil samples were gathered up and the world watched in amazement. Since the creation of the universe, no one has ever walked on the moon before this time. Houston control patched in a special call to the astronauts. President Nixon, calling from the White House, congratulated the two heroes. A phone call from the President, while you are walking on the moon! Now, that would hard to top. So few people get a personal phone call from the President, and to say it took place while on the moon?! That doesn't happen.

And, yet, our verse today, ought to have the same impact. Cornelius, a Roman soldier, not only knew about the one true God, he had prayed to that God. Peter reported that God had heard his prayer. This is greater than a conversation on the moon. The God of all, who is eternal, heard Cornelius. It wasn't a sublevel angel that heard the prayer. It wasn't God's secretary that got the message. (God doesn't have a secretary). It was God. The one that rules the universe. The one that sends blessings every day. The one that forgives. The one that sends punishment. The one that decides when the appointed time for death. The one that sits on the throne of Heaven and earth.

Sometimes we don't think too much about prayer. We do it. We hear sermons about prayer. We understand the basics about prayer. We bow our heads during church services when someone prays. We bow our heads and thank the Lord for the food we eat. We say short prayers. We say personal prayers. We pray for others. We pray for physical things. We pray for the wellbeing of the congregation. We are a praying people, which is incredible. But the magnitude of what that prayer does is something that we often just do not get.

For instance:

- A young mother sits in the emergency room of a local hospital with a sick baby. The child has been crying all night and the mother has done all that she knows. The fever in the child continues to climb. The mother is scared. Holding her precious baby, she prays to God. She asks for mercy for her child. And, in those late night hours, when most folks are asleep, that prayer reaches God and is heard.

(OVER)

- A couple is concerned about their teenage son. He is getting in trouble and is running with the wrong crowd. The parents have talked to him and even taken away some privileges, but the teen continues to go the other way. There are moments when the parents are angry with him. There are times that they feel he is reaching out. Late at night, when he ought to be in bed, he's not. He's not home. The father lays awake, tears streaming down his eyes, praying to God. He's at a lost as to what to do. He doesn't want to lose his son. That prayer reaches God and is heard.
- A preacher sits on the front roll of the church building. Services are taking place. In a moment he will be standing behind the pulpit preaching a sermon that he has worked on all week. He hopes the lesson touches hearts. He wants the congregation to grow closer to the Lord. He says a prayer. His prayer is about his sermon. That prayer reaches God and is heard.
- It's meal time and a young family bows to thank the Lord before they eat. A little child wants to pray. She names her friends, the pets, her family and in the sweetness of her little heart, she thanks the Lord. That prayer reaches God and is heard.

Prayer is one of the few things that we can do anywhere and at any time. We can pray in bed, while driving down the road, while walking into a meeting, before we preach, while we sit on a roller coaster, while visiting a funeral home, while in the hospital. We can pray in crowds or while sitting alone. We can pray long and we can pray short. We can pray about ourselves and we can pray about others.

The fascinating thing about prayer is that God is never too busy to hear us. There is never a place that God cannot hear us. The only situation that affects our prayer is our hearts. Prayer must be in faith. Prayer must be sincere. Prayer is more than reciting memorized words that mean nothing to us. Prayer must be our words. Prayer touches the heart of God because it comes from our heart.

You don't need special equipment to pray. You don't have to be in the right location for prayer. You don't have to wait for a signal to pray. Prayer is asking. Prayer is thanking. Prayer is praising. Prayer is you recognizing that God is and that He can hear you.

Talking to the President while walking on the moon is amazing. Talking to God everyday is even more amazing. The same God that Noah talked to. The same God that Abraham talked to. The same God that Jesus talked to. The same God that our forefathers talked to. Now, you and I get to talk to Him. We don't stand in line and get one chance. Pray without ceasing, defines our relationship and our communication with God.

Your prayers have been heard! What a wonderful thought!

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
