



# THE EXHORTER

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***“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](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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***1 Samuel 15:22 "Samuel said, 'Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.'"***

As old as the Scriptures and as modern and current as today, when someone has made a poor choice they are reminded of what they should have done. Parents do that all the time. Preachers do that in their sermons. But here, in our verse today, it's the prophet Samuel. He asks this question to a king, not just any king, but Israel's first king, king Saul.

Here's the story. Saul was the new king. God wanted Saul to lead Israel against the Amalekites. It was to be a complete and total rout of the enemy. Nothing was to be spared and nothing was to be brought back. Saul didn't do that. He went to battle but he captured the king and brought him back along with the best of the animals and other things. Samuel confronts Saul. He denies wrong. He then passes blame upon the people. He immediately shows that although he stood head and shoulders above others, he was really a small person. Good leaders don't blame others for their mistakes. And, it is here that a question is posed. Which do you think is better, obeying God or sacrificing?

There are many times these things are found in Scriptures. For instance Solomon tells us that a good name is better than fine perfume. He tells us the day of our death is better than the day of our birth. It's better, he says, to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. The end of a matter is better, Solomon says, than the beginning. Most of us would like to argue with Solomon about these things. Funeral home or a party, we'd take the party. A phone call about a baby born or a phone call about someone dying, we'd take the good news about the birth. We even like beginnings better than endings. The beginning of a movie, a book, a vacation, is so much better than the end.

The Lord teaches in a similar way. In the sermon on the mount, the Lord said to first, leave your offering and be reconciled to your brother and then go and worship. Most of us would think that God comes first, so go worship first, and then work things out with your brother. That's not the order Jesus gave.

(OVER)

Now, here are some things we see:

First, God's order of things is often not the way we put place them. This tells us that God doesn't think like we do, or probably more accurately, we don't think like God does. We'd think God ought to be happy with sacrifices and possibly, even the sacrifices will make up for not obeying Him. But that's not the way God sees it. If we obeyed Him, then our sacrifices and our worship would be acceptable and right as well.

So, these things remind us that we must stick with Scriptures and not our own thoughts. How we would do things is often not the way God wants things done.

Second, Sacrifice or obey, is not really the correct choices. One must do both. One doesn't cancel out the other. One isn't more important than the other. If one was going to obey God, then he would sacrifice as well. Our obedience to God's word will govern how we worship and sacrifice. That's missing today. Folks throw up any thing and every thing in worship and believe that God just loves it. God wasn't thrilled with what Cain offered. God wasn't thrilled with the strange fire of Nadab and Abihu. God wasn't happy with the people in Malachi's day who were offering crippled animals. When we remove obedience, we open the door for all kinds of odd, weird and bizarre things. Folks run as fast as they can to the latest innovations and the newest trends. The old is out and the new is in. Cutting edge. Progressive. Pushing the envelope. New ways to make music in worship. New ways to raise money. New ways to combine the physical with the spiritual. It won't be too long until some of these churches will offer sports bars with hundreds of TV monitors, buffalo wings, chips and a cute message written on the napkins. And, why not? If you don't obey, what's wrong with that?

Third, we all face choices that come down to what does the Lord delight in? Keeping that before us will help us make the right decisions. Saul forgot about that. He disobeyed. He thought it was ok. It wasn't. Rather than thinking about God delights in and what God wanted, Saul chose what he wanted. Self over God always leads to disobedience. And, it always leads to trouble and sin. When we start making our choices by what we feel like, then feelings replace faith. We will only do what we feel like doing. So, if we don't feel like being nice, we won't. If we don't feel like going to worship, we won't. If we don't feel like apologizing, we won't. If we don't feel like staying married, we won't. Rather than doing what God wants, our lives are summed up by a song that Sinatra sang, "I did it my way." Saul did. He did it his way. It wasn't the right way. It wasn't God's way. And, it got him in trouble.

So, this means that there will be times I will do things that I do not feel like doing. I will do them because they are the right thing to do. I will do them because God delights in them. I may feel like staying home, but someone needs to talk and they could use some encouragement. I may not really feel like going out, but I will. There may be days that I do not feel like going to worship. Maybe, I'm tired. Maybe, I'm down. Maybe, I'd just like to stay home. But I go. I go because it's the right thing to do. Most times, when I do that, I find that not only was it the right choice, but it really helped turn my spirits around.

Which is better? Which does the Lord delight in? Boy, those two questions could get us out of a lot of trouble. I sure hope I can remember those questions.

Roger Shouse (used by permission)