



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)

January 19, 2020

Jump Start #2273

2 Peter 3:15-16 "and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."

Our verse today contains layers and layers of lessons. Great lessons. Lessons that we need to learn and take to heart. But our attention is drawn to the little expression, "the rest of the Scriptures."

In the original language, the word scripture simply means writings. It comes from a word where we get the concept of "graphics." However, this word 'Scripture' has a limited and specific use in the Bible. It is used exclusively of God's writings, the Bible. So, when Paul said, "All scripture is inspired of God..." he was not talking about all the writings in the world, but only God's writings. The Bible mentions poets and the book of Jashar. Those writings were not from God. They are not "scripture." The questions that the Corinthians sent to Paul were not from God. They were not "scripture." Scripture is what God inspired and the Holy Spirit revealed.

Critics of the Bible like to claim that the Bible is an edited version of common myths and stories that were floating around long ago. They like to point out that many cultures have a flood story. So, what's in our Bibles, they tell us, was just collected, cleaned up, edited and nothing more than the fictitious stories of ancient man. Further, critics love to claim that there were several ancient books written around the same time. A council of scholars, many years later, after much debate, voted upon which books ought to be in the Bible and which ones shouldn't. From this, they conclude that the church produced the Bible and the only reason some books are in there is because of a vote.

When faced with these claims, many believers shudder. They don't know what to say, nor how to answer such charges. If the Bible is not from God, the next thought is, how do we know there is a God? Critics are ready to sweep both the Bible and God out of modern thought and modern lives. They feel we would be much better off without such foolishness. And, as former Beatle John Lennon sang, "Imagine there is no Heaven, above us only sky." That is the wish of secular fools.

(OVER)

So, let's dive into this. Heavy stuff for a Jump Start, but I hope useful, practical and faith building.

First, it is true that a Catholic council voted upon what books ought to be included in the Bible. No denying what happened in history. But, what is not told, nor mentioned is our verse. Long before the fourth century councils, current writings were classified as "Scripture." That special word that is used only of God's writings. Our verse links Paul's writings with "the rest of the Scriptures." Paul's writings were considered Scriptures. This is long before the councils held their vote. The councils didn't give us the Bible, God did. The church didn't produce the Bible, God did. Peter told his readers that Paul's letters were Scripture. Paul's letters were God's writings. Even before the first century came to a end, that designation and classification was made. It was made without a vote. It was made without the decisions of man. It was made as soon as the ink was put on the paper.

On the road of Emmaus, Jesus explained His mission using the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. Those were considered God's words. When the Sadducees tested Jesus with a hypothetical situation about marriage and resurrection, Jesus said, "You are mistaken not understanding the Scriptures..." There is that word again. Jesus then quotes from Exodus, which He used as Scripture. Exodus was God's writings. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about divorce, Jesus said, "Have you not read," and then He quotes from Genesis. That was considered Scripture. When tempted by Satan, Jesus three times said, "It is written," and then quotes Deuteronomy.

It seems as the Bible was being written, it was understood and accepted as being from God.

Second, because there are many flood stories in different cultures does not mean the Bible story is the final edited version of all of those. It may have been just the opposite. Because there really was a flood, as man spread out, the story was carried from place to place.

Third, critics stumble with an answer as to how the Bible is accurate with sciences before those discoveries were known and with geography and history. And just how is it that the Bible has such a power over people. We have Bible apps on our phone. We stay up late at night to read the Bible. We read the Bible every day. People have changed their lives because of the words found in the Bible. It has given hope when all hope was lost. It has led to forgiveness and reconciliation when all other efforts failed. It has brought prodigals home and dried tears after a funeral. No other book sells as much as the Bible does. No other book has had such an impact upon the history of the world as the Bible has. If the Bible is a collection of man's writings, why are there no other books that even come close to what the Bible is like?

It's old, but it's practical and relevant to our times and this culture. It's understandable. It's enjoyable. It's useful. It never changes. It worked for the folks in the medieval ages. It worked during the dark days of Hitler. It comforted us on 9-11. It will be there for us tomorrow.

Critics would love to have every page removed from our reading, but that will never happen. God won't allow that. There was a time when few people could read the Bible. It was translated into the common languages of the day. There was a time when the Bible was forbidden, yet people produced it. Some gave their lives to translate, circulate and produce the Bible.

Scriptures-a powerful word. A word and a concept that we must demand be found in our sermons. A word and a concept that must be found in our homes. A word and a concept that must dwell in our hearts.

God's writings. From Heaven to you, that's what the Bible is.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)