



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)

March 21, 2021

Jump Start # 2265

Matthew 6:11 "Give us this day our daily bread."

One lesson that comes from this is the fact that the Lord does care about our physical wellbeing. His mission was to seek and to save the lost, but He didn't ignore, nor was He indifferent to the physical needs around us.

One great illustration of this is our verse today. In teaching the disciples how to pray, the Lord honored God's name, talked about God's kingdom, temptation and forgiving-all spiritual concepts. But sprinkled among those Heavenly principles is found our verse, asking God for our daily bread. Now, could it be, as some have suggested, that "bread" here actually means God's truth? Could be, but remember, before Jesus fed the multitudes he "blessed the food" (Mt 14:19). He again did this after the resurrection. He was with the disciples and "took bread and blessed it" (Lk 24:30). And, at the feeding of the four thousand the text tells us that Jesus gave "thanks" (Mt 15:36). He gave "thanks" at the last supper (Mt 26:27). So, it is fitting to think that here in this model prayer Jesus is showing the disciples that we ought to pray for our physical bread.

God is not just concerned with our insides. The outsides matter. God is concerned with our attitudes. God is concerned with what we do with our money. God is concerned about our use of time. Paul said, "Make the most of your time."

All of this reminds us and teaches us that:

- Our prayers must include both the physical and the spiritual. It's easy to be lopsided in our prayers and to limit our spiritual prayer to quickly asking God to "forgive us of our sins," as we end the prayer. We need to be praying to be strong, useful and to have open eyes to be the hands and feet of God today. However, we need also to pray for our safety, our wellbeing, our jobs. We are dual nature creatures, both physical and spiritual. Those dual natures are not separate, but intertwined with each other. One impacts the other. So often discouragement comes from what happens to us physically. The depressed Paul admitted in 2 Corinthians 7 that he had conflicts without and fears within. A few chapters before he talked about the outer man and the inner man. The outer man was decaying but the inner man was being renewed day by day.

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- Our preaching and our classes must touch upon both the physical and the spiritual side of life. Many of the things that causes stress and worry are fears about our jobs, money and our children. Jesus spoke more about money than He did Heaven. We could easily dismiss all of this by saying, "money doesn't matter," but it does. It occupies our hearts. It takes money to do things, even in the kingdom. The very fact that Jesus healed people physically shows that He was concerned about what happens to us physically. He used those miracles to point to the spiritual and especially to His authority, but the bridge those concepts traveled over was the physical health of those people.

So, from time to time we ought to teach people about being stewards and responsible with their time, money, talents. These are not solely physical topics. They drive the heart and the soul of a person. Our faith determines the proper use of these things.

- Understanding how the flesh and the spirit, or the body and the soul of a person connects helps us to see greater spiritual lessons. Some do not understand what they do and what happens on a Friday is just as important as what happens on Sunday. Some see a disconnect between what is done in the church house and what is done in the corporate house or the school house. Lie, cheat and steal during the week, but put on a tie and sing those wonderful hymns on Sunday and convince yourself that all is fine.

I knew a man who served as a leader among God's people in a congregation. Yet, at home, he physically beat his wife. It angers me to think how he fooled the people of God. But this is exactly what we are talking about. What I do at home, what I do at work, what I do at play and what I do in worship are all woven together. Together they define us. We do not have separate categories or like the children's dinner plate that has the separate sections to it. In the belly, all the food mixes together. All the food touches each other. We may think of life like a giant plate that is sectioned off, but the reality, all of it mixes together and touches each other. My work affects my worship and my worship affects my work.

Not understanding this is where hypocrisy thrives. Around the people of God, I appear to be godly. Around work, I'm all secular. In the field of sports, I'm so competitive, that I might cheat to win. And when the people of God run into me at work or at play, they see for the first time, that I'm not the same as I am in worship. My spirit, my attitude and even my language may be all different. What this person has done is kept Christ out of his work place and his recreation. He is living two lives. He is doubled minded, as James says. He is a hypocrite and before long, one side will prevail over the other. Either he will get stronger in faith and that will carry over to his work and play, or he will become weaker in faith, and begin to drop out spiritually.

Jesus healed sick people. He didn't say, "that's not my concern," nor, "I'm not here to take care of those things." He was concerned about both the inside and the outside of us. And, He demonstrated that He was the Lord of both the inside and the outside. He commands our righteousness in our bodies and in our souls. What happens on the outside can set the tone for the inside.

Could this be why Jesus stated that the greatest command was to love the Lord with all your heart, soul and strength. Mind, body and soul-give it all to God.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)
