



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 # 2777

1 Thessalonians 5:14 “We urge you brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”

It is often good in life to take a step back, catch your breath and see the big picture of things. When that is done, a better perspective takes place and one truly sees how blessed he is. Our problems can seem big, and often they are. But all around us, God has built a network of support, help and encouragement. The church is amazing. Living examples all around us. Wonderful reminders of the thoughts, attitudes and walk that we ought to have. So many lessons taught, so much depth, so much good.

We see this in our verse today. The unruly, the fainthearted, and the weak, were not on their own. They were not voted out, cut loose, or left to figure things out. Others would be there. They would slow down and help them along. I see the image of an injured football player. The team doesn't stand on the sidelines and watch that player crawl to the sidelines, struggling and in pain. Absolutely not. Never. Trainers, coaches and other players pick him up and support him and help him limp to the sidelines. He is not on his own.

There are two powerful O.T. stories of those who were on their own. We teach their stories and we love to hear lessons about their lives, but what an advantage you and I have with each other.

First, is the Joseph factor. Abandoned by his family. Falsely accused. Character attacked. Punished for something he didn't do. Forgotten. And, yet the Joseph story is one of love, forgiveness and grace. He was not bitter. He was not cruel. Revenge was not in his heart. But Joseph did that without receiving cards in the mail to encourage him. He chose that without having a church bulletin to read. He didn't have blogs, podcasts, sermons and a fellowship of like brethren who were praying for him. Not Joseph. He was alone. He was on his own. No help, except from God. No encouragement except what he could find by himself.

No one to counsel him. No one to remind him. No one to teach him. No one to tell him the right thing to do.

And, when we think about Joseph and all the right choices he made, he did that without any help. It shames us to think that you and I are surrounded with so much help, but we don't do as well as Joseph did. We get bitter. We complain. We make the wrong choices. We are unable to forgive. And, this with a mountain of sermons, classes, people, and help around us. It sure makes us wonder what God thinks about us. We think the journey is so hard, yet we have so many supporting us, patting us on the back, and helping us. We have the N.T. and the examples of Jesus. Joseph didn't have that. We have the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians and the picture of the new man in Ephesians and Colossians. Joseph didn't have those. How could Joseph do what he did with no help? And, why can't we do better with so much help? Sure makes one think.

Second, the David factor. David and an army of 600 were being chased about the country by King Saul. While they were on the run, invaders came and kidnapped all their families. Wives and children were gone when they returned home. The men were so low, heart broken and defeated that they planned to kill David. And, right there in that context, the Bible says that "David strengthened himself." David encouraged himself. He didn't have someone to pray with him. He didn't have someone to send him a card with a nice verse written on it. He didn't have a preacher to talk to. He didn't have kind messages on his Facebook page. He didn't have a video sermon to watch. Alone and in trouble, David strengthened himself. Much like Joseph, David didn't have a church thinking about him. He was on his own. It was just David and his faith. It was just Joseph and his faith.

So, maybe it's time we lifted our heads up and stop feeling defeated by pandemics, isolation and the disruption of things. Sure things are not the way we'd like them to be, but none of us are on our own, unless we have chosen that. You can find wonderful sermons to listen to everyday of the week. There are daily reminders, through these Jump Starts, Quick Quotes, on line video classes to help you. You can pick up your phone can call a number of brethren. Through email you can connect with God's family worldwide.

When I think of the Joseph and David factors, it sure humbles me. It makes we think why do I feel that things are so tough. God is good and through the network and fellowship that He designed, we are never truly alone. Help is there, if you reach out for it. Sometimes we must let others know. Sometimes we need to drop a few hints. Sometimes we need to ask others to pray for us. And, they will. You will never be left alone on the field, wounded and having to crawl off on your own. God's people will come running. You will never be alone like Joseph or David.

So, let us be thankful for what we have. Let us be there for others. Let us come running to let them lean upon us. Let us stay connected, close and spiritual. We have one another and that's a wonderful thing. Bless be the tie that binds our hearts...

Roger Shouse
