



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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April 25, 2021

Jump Start # 2272

1 Peter 2:11 "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."

Peter's words in our verse is a good reminder to us that we don't fit in here and that folks do things differently than we do. But this is nothing new. It's always been that with the people of God. For instance:

- In Egyptian culture, the river, moon and harvest represented gods that were worshipped. The leaders of society buried with them treasures that they believed they could use in the next life. All of this was different from the culture of Israel's one God.
- In Babylonian culture, public worship of idols was required and laws were written that put the people of God in difficult situations.
- In Roman culture, the dead emperors were worshipped as gods and later on, even some of the living ones claimed to be gods.

And, today, in our culture, sexual immorality is accepted as normal. Climate changers are predicting the end of life within a few years. Tolerance of all things radical and extreme is expected and the acceptance of the Bible as the inspired word of God is flatly denied and renounced. Evolution is in and mocking Christian values is standard.

Our times are not that much different than others. The fact that God's people do not fit in is nothing new. The very definition of "Holy" means to be separate or set apart. Separate from what? From what is around us.

So, there are some lessons for us:

First, we ought to find great help and examples as we read about the people of God during these difficult times. We see that some suffered. We see that they stood their ground. These examples ought to inspire us, help us and encourage us to stand with God.

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Second, what the people of God did during those difficult times was to continue to be faithful to God and try to show others the better way. You don't read about written campaigns, protest marches, running for office or demanding that their voice be heard. When Peter was told that he could no longer preach Jesus, his reply was that we can't but help preaching and teaching Jesus. He didn't run to the courts. He didn't file lawsuits. He didn't play the victim. He simply continued to preach Jesus. When Paul was dragged literally out of a town and then stoned nearly to death, he got up and went back into that town. The people of God didn't make a lot of noise, they simply continued to worship God as the Lord directed them.

Third, there is a lot of hype and noise that some make but there isn't much substance to what they are saying. One must wonder if some of this is a stunt to keep their name before the public eye. Screaming at someone doesn't put proof on your side. Evidence lacking, fear rising, some will go to extreme measures simply because they have nothing else that they can do. The people of God have always had God behind them. Their proof is God. Their evidence is the Scriptures. We don't have to have a PhD in biology to understand that evolution is false. Soft tissue found in recently discovered dinosaur bones is causing the evolutionary time table to crash. Soft tissue cannot last millions and millions of years. Back to the drawing board and new twists are being developed to justify evolution and soft tissue.

Fourth, the people of God are governed by rules and laws made by godless people. It's always been that way. The Pharaohs, the kings of Babylon, the Caesars, even down to our political system, will continue to make laws that are difficult for the people of God. Pharaoh killed the babies in Moses' time. Herod killed the babies in Jesus' days. The Babylonian king ruled against praying. The Roman and Jewish leaders ruled against preaching the Gospel. Things can be tough, but the people of God always carry on serving the Lord.

We must understand that we are different. Things are different here. I remember being in a restaurant in Germany. It was a cold, rainy day. People came in with their dogs. It wasn't seeing eye dogs nor service animals. These were just plain ole' pets. We were trying to eat and the smell of wet dog filled the air. I remember thinking right then, "Boy, they do things differently here. We don't do those things where we are from." And, that's it exactly. We don't do those things where we are from because we are not from here.

The song, "This world is not my home," is not just a pleasant thought, it's the truth to our passage today. We are strangers and aliens here. This isn't home. We are not citizens here. We don't belong here. So, it shouldn't shock us how crazy and nuts this world becomes. More and more people are showing that they belong here. This world is their home. And, sadly, for some, this is as close to Heaven as they will ever see. And, what they are seeing is a distorted and blurred picture. But for the people of God, this world is as much of Hell as they will ever see.

Our focus must be upon the eternal. For Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, all she had to do was click those ruby slippers three times and say, "there's no place like home." It took her back to her black and white Kansas farm house. For us, there is no magical clicking of our shoes. For us, it's walking by faith, trusting the Lord and longing for that Heavenly home.

This world is not our home. Aren't you glad? Can you imagine this is all that there is? Can you imagine this is as good as it gets? Crazy. Darkness. No purpose. No direction. And, for most, no God.

But thanks be to God for the incredible gift. The gift of salvation! Believe it. Live it. Share it. Don't hide it.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
