



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 # 3076

1 Thessalonians 5:25 "Brethren, pray for us."

The end of 1 Thessalonians lists a series of rapid bullet points that God wanted the brethren to be engaged in. The apostle doesn't prove these points. He doesn't go into detail about these points. He simply states them with the understanding that the brethren would take these things to heart and do them.

Our verse today is one such example. He says, "Pray for us." Now, for you and I we would link a series of questions to this statement. Questions such as, "Why do you need prayers?" Or, "Just want specifically do you want us to pray about?" Or, "Who all is included in the 'us' part?"

But none of those things are addressed, which makes me wonder if we kick the can of commandments around so much that we fail to do what a passage plainly says. Like an object in our hands, we look at a passage from every angle, detail what each word means, trace the history of the words, find connections to the Old Testament and do just about everything but obey what the command says. It reminds me of some of those food contest shows on TV. Someone makes a great looking cake. The judges talk about it, look at it, study it, consider what all was used in it, and I'm thinking, 'just eat it.' It's good to learn all that we can about a passage. There are many bridges connecting words, thoughts and concepts that are linked together throughout the Scriptures, but in my mind, here is this young teenage boy in Thessalonica who hears these words, "Pray for us." He may not know how many other times the word prayer is found in this letter. He may not know about Jesus praying all night. He may not fully grasp all that was going on in Paul's world. But, he knows how to pray. So, silently, he bows his head and offers a prayer to the Lord of Heaven and earth. He is thankful for Paul, because through the apostle, faith has begun in this young heart. Because of Paul, a congregation started in this home town. He prays for Paul's safety. He prays for God's continual use of Paul. His prayer is simple. His prayer is not long. But he prays. And, Heaven hears his prayer.

I like that image and picture of a young man praying for Paul. And, when one of us asks for prayers from the church, shouldn't it be about the same? Sometimes a person feels like they have to fill out a questionnaire detailing all the reasons why the church should pray for him.

(OVER)

We want to know if there is some sin involved in this. We want to know if this person has weak faith. We want to know if the elders are involved in this situation. Details...details...details. We'll pray, only after we get all of our answers first. The answers must pass our examining hearts before we'll offer any prayers. We must be satisfied first. And, why is it that way? Why can't one of us simply say, "Will you pray for me?" and that be enough? Why can't we say, "Absolutely," and then go immediately into a prayer?

It may be that more would like the church to pray for them but they fear having to run through the gauntlet of questions and examining hearts before a prayer will be offered. Have we become the guardians of Heaven and we won't allow anyone to pray unless it passes our standard? What if our standard is flawed? What if God wonders, "Why won't they pray?"

And, then there are those who seem to ask for prayers more often than others. It's a rare day to find one of the shepherds of the congregation walking forward and saying, "Will you pray for me?" That shockwave would send everyone into orbit. What is going on, we'd wonder. Is he about to step down from serving?

And, yet, here in our passage we have an apostle saying, "Pray for us." Could it be that we have gotten to the point that we feel that we don't need the prayers of others. Could it be that we are thinking, "I'll pray for myself and I don't want others to think I need anything?" Do we feel that asking for prayers is a sign of weakness? Would we dare say that about Paul? Does something have to be terribly wrong before we reach out and ask for the prayers of others?

Maybe if we asked for prayers more often people would genuinely get the impression that all of us need the Lord. Maybe others would realize that asking others to pray for you is a good thing, not a shameful thing. Maybe it would reinforce the belief that there is power in prayer and that God hears our prayers.

Sometimes when prayers are asked it is an odd situation. A co-worker's cousin's mother is having surgery and would we pray for that person. The audience has no idea who is being prayed for. And, once the surgery passes, nothing is ever said again about that person. We pray for a stranger's surgery, but we don't pray for the salvation of their soul. We seem more concerned about the health in the body than the wellness of their soul. All of this seems a bit odd to me. And, this may add to the reasons why we are reluctant to ask others to pray for us.

Pray for us...pray for me. Do we have to know why? Do we have to go negative in our thoughts? Could we just rejoice in being able to help a saint by praying? Don't we believe that we all need prayers? Don't we understand that we all need God's help?

Pray for us...I will. Will you?

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
