



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 # 3121

Titus 2:11-12 "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age"

Recently I preached a two part lesson on grace. I called the miniseries, "Grace before Salvation," and "Grace after Salvation." It's the after part that we probably could spend more time on. That's where our verse today is directed. It's not pointed towards those who need to be saved. It's written to those who are saved. We still need grace. We need grace as much after salvation as we do before salvation.

Grace teaches us. It teaches us to live better than we have. It teaches us to live differently than what we have. Grace is one of those qualities that the more you get, the more you pass it on. We have been given grace and so we ought to extend grace to others. That's hard for many. We tend to see things as black and white. We are quick and ready to throw the book at someone who has stepped over the line. We want mercy, but we often have a hard time giving mercy to someone else. Jonah had a problem with this. The older brother of the prodigal had problems with this. Many of the Pharisees had problems with this. The servant in Jesus' parable in Matthew 18 had problems with this. And, truth be, sometimes you and I have trouble with this.

Why is it that way? You'd think we ought to be the fastest to forgive, quick on grace and generous with second chances. But many times it's not that way. The stares. The whispers. The gossip. The questions. It's led some to understand that God gives second chances, but His children won't. Some are ready to come back to God, but they are hesitant about coming back to church. So, why is it that way?

First, some have never learned from Grace. Our passage says Grace instructs or teaches. But to learn, we must be teachable. Some don't want to learn. Some don't want to extend grace. Some are willing to shut the door on others and lock them out for good. Now, just how do we learn from grace?

(OVER)

· God's generous love and compassion reminds us that it's not about us, but all about Him. We were not loveable. We were not good. We were not nice. Yet Jesus came. He came before we stopped doing wrong. He came before we made promises to do better. He came before we showed any signs of improvement. He came at the worst time because we were at our worst. Why do people get caught up in the "paying forward" concept in some coffee shops? The car in front pays for your order. That's really nice. Don't even know who that person was. So, in turn, you pay for the guy behind you. He in turns pays for the guy behind him. A whole chain of paying for someone else's order. It all started with the first person was nice and generous. God was the one who started. He was the first. He extended grace to us. Now, it's our turn. Grace has been given to us. There is someone behind us. Will we extend grace to that person?

· Second, sometimes we forget how awful we were before Jesus. Now that we are right, we've forgotten that we were once wrong. Becoming cleansed, it's easy to look down upon the filth and dirt of others and be horrified at how they are living, all the time forgetting that we weren't much different before God saved us. Our patience can run thin with some people because their journey with the Lord is truly a journey. Up and down. In and out. All around and all over the place. Some have repeatedly asked for forgiveness. Some have "gone forward" more times than we can count. We wonder why they can't ever seem to get things right. We must remember, Grace teaches.

· Third, we fail to see the connection vertically and horizontally. In mathematics these may be separate, but not in God's world. The vertical influences the horizontal and what we do horizontally directly impacts the vertical. By vertical, I mean our relationship with God. By horizontal, I mean our relationship with one another. A person cannot be right with God and wrong with his fellow brother. How we treat each other, helps or hurts how God treats us. Jesus said, "If you do not forgive, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." When we do not know this or understand this, then what I do in our fellowship will have nothing to do with my walk with the Lord. If I do not see that these sets of lines intersect and what happens in one influences what happens in the other, then I'm bound to struggle with giving grace.

Grace teaches. Have you learned anything from grace?

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
