



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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2 Kings 5:11 "But Naaman was furious and went away and said, 'Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.'"

Oh Naaman was upset. He was so angry and frustrated that he left. The great Syrian captain who had defeated so many enemies could not win this battle. Naaman was fighting two new battles. One was with his health. He had leprosy and he was going to lose that battle. Leprosy was not curable. The other battle was with Elisha, the prophet from Israel.

Most know this story so well. The hero of the story is God. It's always God. But playing a significant secondary role was an unnamed servant girl from Israel. Away from home, a captive, she offers help to Naaman. A prophet in her home land can cure him. Connections are made. Naaman travels to meet Elisha. The prophet doesn't even come out to see Naaman. Instead, a servant comes with an odd message, 'go dip seven times in the Jordan River.' Not the words he wanted to hear. This is where our verse comes in. Angry, mad, fuming, the captain leaves. Things didn't turn out like he thought they would. At least Elisha should have shown himself. Why dip in a river? Why that river? Why seven times? What's wrong with Elisha?

And, all of this takes us to the valuable lesson about when people frustrate and disappoint us. It happens at home. The conversation does not go like you thought it should. It happens at work. It happens in politics. And, it even happens among brethren.

A great idea is put on the table. Even before you can fully explain it, the idea is shoot down and crashes in flames. Sometimes the reasoning given is unreasonable. Sometimes the answer is "No," even before you are heard. And, like our Naaman, we get upset. Sometimes we just want to walk out of the meeting. We leave thinking how wrong, unreasonable, and unfair the others are. And, there we stand with Naaman, furious, wanting to leave and never come back. When people do not listen, it accelerates your anger. I know. Been there, and I know what that emotion feels like.

What would God have us to do? You can't change people.

(OVER)

First, like Naaman had to learn, our ideas, way of thinking and how we expect things should be often are not. At the end of the day what Naaman wanted was to be cured. He was. It didn't happen the way he thought it would be, but he was still cured. There was no grand show. The prophet didn't wave his arms. No great crowd saw this. Yet, Naaman was cured. Our perspective may miss something. Wisdom, experience can bring a consideration that we haven't thought of.

Second, some people shut things down because it was not their idea. Some do not listen. Some have their minds made up and nothing will change that. That makes all of this extremely difficult. Pray before you begin the meeting. Stand up for what you believe. Ask for proof, evidence. Bring facts. Remain calm. But in the end, those in charge will make the decision and it may not be what you think is right.

How you handle rejection and defeat says a lot about your character. There may be situations that are a matter of right and wrong, legal and unlawful, Biblical and unbiblical. And, when the lines of your conscience have been crossed, you may have to leave. You may have to find another job. You may have to look for another congregation to worship with. If that becomes your conclusion, do not leave slamming doors, making threats, or trying to get others to follow you. Don't become the central point of the disagreement. Make the issue, the issue, nor you.

Third, your pride has a lot to do with how you handle things. Some are great at telling others what to do, but they do not handle the same coming to them. Listen carefully. You may be wrong. If, so, make things right. If not, stand for what you believe in.

On my desk is a statue of Martin Luther. It's there to remind me to stand for what you believe in. There may come a time to nail things to the door, as Luther literally did. Understand, with Luther, and likely with you, there will be consequences that follow. Luther's life was threatened. He was pushed out of a system he once believed in. Lines were drawn and conclusions made. You may not win every skirmish in life, likely you won't. But winning the battle is something that you must do. The battle is not the budget, starting services on time or a number of other things that can get us upset. The battle is the salvation of our souls. Lose that, and you've lost everything. Losing your cool. Saying things that damage your influence, letting anger get the best of you, might win a small skirmish, but you'll quickly lose the war acting that way.

Fourth, remember when the tables are turned and someone comes to you, don't shut them down before they have a chance to speak. What they say may not be correct, but correct with gentleness as the Scriptures teach us. **(Gal. 6:1)** When people are upset, they often bring up things from the past that has nothing to do with the current conversation. They often generalize and want to point their finger to other wrongs. Stay on the topic at hand. Stay Biblical.

Remember, not to assume that the Lord treats us like a few brethren have. God has never let you down. God has never closed the door to you. Be an example because others are watching.

Furious Naaman. Calm down. Breathe. Listen. Help is there if you will but carefully do what was offered. Words that ought to help us as well.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

