



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 # 3154

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Our verse today is so familiar to us. We’ve heard it all of our lives. We’ve seen “John 3:16” on a sign at a ballgame. We’ve seen it spray painted on posts. The passage defines what the Bible is all about. The passage explains what the mission of Jesus was. So simple. So familiar. And, so easy to take for granted and to not put much thought to it.

In his letters, John would later tell us that “God is love,” and, that “He first loved us.” Good students of the Bible understand that this love is not an emotional feeling. It’s not that are so adorable and cute. It’s not that God couldn’t live without us. That thinking distorts the truth and makes us think more of ourselves than we ought to. God’s love is a choice. God’s love is demonstrated in actions.

Here are five reminders about the incredible love of God.

First, God loves you even when you do not think about Him. The love between God and us is not like a power cord. Unplug the cord and the power ceases. If you are vacuuming a room and you stretch the cord to far and it becomes unplugged, your sweeper stops. Without the power cord it doesn’t work. God’s love is not like that. We may go hours, or sadly even days, without thinking about God. He still loves you.

Second, God still loves you when you disobey Him. This does not mean that God approves of your rebellion. It does not mean that God looks the other way and ignores your sins. He sees them. He knows. Yet, He still loves. Romans 5:8 says, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Did you catch the “while we were yet sinners”? It wasn’t after we were sinners. Nor, when we promised never to do wrong again. Nor, after we repented. No, while we were sinners, Christ came. The best came at the worst possible time. We weren’t showing our best. We weren’t doing our best. God loves you. He loves you even when you break His heart.

Third, God loves you even though He knows everything about you. No one knows you better than God does. Sometimes we are good at hiding secrets and telling people just certain things. We always keep the curtain partially closed on things in our lives that we do not want anyone to know. If you really knew me,

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many think, you probably wouldn't like me. This has led some to be very selective in what they tell others. It makes transparency difficult. And, for some, this translates to their feelings with God. They are not as open as they ought to be, fearing that God may no longer like them. God knows. You can never surprise God. God will never think, "Wow. I didn't know you did that." He knows. He knows your motives, your attitudes, your thoughts, the little things we say under our breath that we think no one else hears. God knows. He knows and He still loves you. Remarkable. Amazing.

Fourth, God has never stopped loving you. Since the day you came, God has loved you. Now, the same can't be said of us. There has been times when we haven't liked other people, even our own family. Many a teen has said hateful things to their parents. And, there was a season or longer for all of us when we were out in the far country of sin. We didn't give God much thought. Some even fought God, denied God and mocked God. God still loved us, even then. Yes, there has been moments in our lives when we haven't loved God, but there has never been a time when God has not loved you. We might wonder and even question that. Why were my prayers not answered "yes," if He loves me. Why did bad things happen to me if He loves me? Why has my life been so difficult if He loves me? Job suffered, yet God loved Him. The heroes in Hebrews 11 all suffered and God loved them. The presence of difficulties in your life is not an indication of how much God loves you. Those who have the best life are loved the most and those who have struggled a lifetime, God barely loves. Not true. Not at all. God uses trials and temptations as His classroom to teach us and mold us into the character that is strong, spiritual and helpful. God has never stopped loving you.

Fifth, you cannot do anything to make God love you more. This is hard for us to grasp. We tend to think if I go to worship services, read my Bible and make right choices, God will love me more. He won't. He can't. He already loves you all that He can. 100%. That's just not the way we think. You buy me a present and I'll like you. You get me some Dodgers tickets and I'll really like you. That's not the way God operates.

Then, why go to worship? Why try? Why read the Bible? If God can't love me any more than He already does, why am I doing those things? And, maybe it's time we asked that question. Is that the reason you go to worship? Are you trying to impress God or win Him over to your side? Do you feel that doing those things makes you a better person than those who do not do those things? Maybe the reason and the motive behind what we have been doing is wrong.

In our congregation we have a bunch of young engaged couples. The world of a young engaged girl turns upside down once she says "yes," to "Will you marry me?" From that time on, it's all about the wedding. Wedding magazines and wedding websites fill her day. It's about the right place, the right dress, the right music, the right food, the right colors, the right decorations. I know, I've seen this. Details down to the right forks and even the napkins are sought after and decided. Why? Does the girl do this so her beloved will love her? He has already asked her to marry him. She doesn't do this to get him to like her, she does this BECAUSE he likes her. She wants everything to be perfect.

It's that way with us and the Lord. Why do I go to worship so often? Not to get God to like me. He already does. I do that BECAUSE He likes me. Why read the Bible? Because God loves me and I want to know everything about God. Why make the right choices? So, God will love me? No, He already does. I want to please God and making the right choices does just that.

God loves you. For God so loved the world...

Amazing!

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

