



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 # 3569

Psalms 121:1-2 "I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from whence shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made the Heaven and the earth."

Our passage for today is one that has comforted so many through the years. I think of the soldier years ago, on the battlefield, bullets whizzing by, the blast of bombs thundering through the sky, scared and seeing the signs of death all around him, he calls upon the Lord to help him. I think of the young mother who sits beside her small child who lays in a hospital bed, with tubes and IVs and medical staff in and out and she wonders if her child will make it. She calls upon the Lord for help. I think of the weary preacher who feels that he is no longer needed. He senses a movement to push him out and he is scared and not sure what to do. He calls upon the Lord for help.

Some thoughts for us:

First, no one truly sees your situation and circumstances as well as the Lord does. Sometimes even our perspective doesn't show the total picture. God knows. We tend to slant things our direction and make things favorable towards us. God knows. And, when no one else fully understands, or worse, cares, God does. When no one else can help, God can. When people give up and declare that nothing more can be done, God knows better. My help comes from the Lord. What a blessing to know someone is there.

Second, the help that the Lord gives may not be exactly what I wanted or even anticipated, but since it is from the Lord, it will always be right. I want God to remove troubles. God may want me to walk through them to learn some great character lessons. I want God to put distance between me and the people that causes me stress. God may want me to be in those circles to let my light shine. I want sunshine and God may realize that I need rain. I want things easy and God may know that I need the difficult. I want everyone to like me and God may realize that isn't best for me.

(OVER)

God helps but we may not recognize it because we are looking in the wrong direction. We've made up our minds how God ought to do things. And, when God sends a Titus, as in 2 Cor 7 rather than removing the troubles in Paul's life, we may look right past him. We may wonder why God doesn't answer our prayers. We may think God doesn't hear or worse, God doesn't care. God helps.

Third, what God is really after is the salvation of our souls and our devotion and trust in Him. Getting us back on our feet is fine, but that's little good if one doesn't keep looking to Heaven. The Psalmist looked to Heaven when he needed help. How about when he didn't need help? How about when things were going well in his life? God doesn't want us to use Him just because there are no other options. God doesn't want us crying to Him for help and then forgetting all about Him afterwards. What about worship? Will I worship before, during and after the troubles? What about trusting God? Faith and obedience are the two sides of the same coin. Don't talk about faith and trust, if one is going to ignore what God says.

Romans 8:28 is a wonderfully misused passage. There the apostle states that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. This is not Heaven's one-a-day vitamin for everyone. There are two qualifiers in this verse. First, the working for good. Whose good? My good? God's good? Going to the pig pen wasn't good for the prodigal, but it was, because it broke his spirit and brought him home. A night in jail, a trip to the hospital, sleeping on the couch, a visit by the shepherds may all be viewed as bad things. But they may be the very things that brings about "good." The good is the salvation of souls and the walking with the Lord.

Far too many see the "good" in Romans 8 as personal things. Good would be no surgery. Good would be no cancer. Good would be a raise. Good would be an extra week of vacation. And, what would those things bring? More selfishness? God's good is a close fellowship with His creation.

The second qualifier in the Romans 8 passage is that it is intended for those who "love God and are called according to His purpose." That's not everyone. Not everyone loves God. Not everyone has answered the call of God. Using Romans 8 to anyone and everyone can be misleading and misusing Scripture.

Help from Heaven. It can come in many forms. It may come through the Sunday sermon. It may come from the conversation with another Christian. It may come as you quietly read God's word. It may come in the form of a brother or sister in the congregation.

Help from Heaven. Looking to Heaven, knowing God is there and God is good, makes all the difference.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

