



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 # 3916

Deuteronomy 9:1-2 "Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to Heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard it said, 'Who shall stand before the sons of Anak?'"

Our verse today are not the kind of words that one would expect from Heaven. As Israel was soon to cross the Jordan river into the promise land, you'd think a "You can do it," pep talk would be expected. Instead, the nations there are bigger and stronger than you. They are fortified up to Heaven and everyone knows no one can stand before them.

Imagine a coach using such language before the game starts. "Boys, we don't have a chance today. Every team that has faced our opponent has been wiped out. They are going to slaughter us. Good luck, boys!"

For Israel, they must have thought, why is God sending us this way if we don't have a chance? Why would God do this to us? The next verse tells it all. In Deuteronomy 9:3, the Lord says, "Know therefore today that it is the Lord your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the Lord has spoken to you."

It would not be in the power, strategy, cleverness or wisdom of Israel that wins these battles. On their own, Israel didn't have a chance. But, God going before them, was going to pave the way so it would be easy, quickly and smooth for Israel. Trust God. God can do what you can't.

And, from this wonderful passage, we ought to see some lessons for us:

First, there are situations which are hopeless for us. Sometimes we refuse to admit that. Sometimes we will fight and fight and work and work and do all that we can to win battles that we cannot win. We tire ourselves. We get frustrated. We become doubtful. There are things fortified to Heaven, such as error, evil, the forces of Satan and death itself. But, with the power of God and the Lord going before us, the battles are much easier.

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Second, through Jesus, God has gone before us. He has done this in showing us how to resist the attacks of Satan. He has done this in showing us how to deal with those who ridicule and scoff. He has done this in conquering death. The wonderful shepherd Psalm, Psalm 23, has the Lord going with us in those dark valleys of death. He doesn't wait for us on the other side. He does not send us in alone. He is with us. The conquering Savior is there to guide us, comfort us and see us safely through. The valleys do not defeat us. The valleys do not become our homes.

Third, faith in the Lord drives out fear. Our verses today would cause fear. Bigger than you. Stronger than you. No one can with stand them. Cancer can seem that way. Church problems can seem that way. Family issues can seem that way. God is greater than any problem. God is going before you and He will destroy them and subdue them. What about fortified cities? Nothing to God. What about great and tall people? Nothing to God.

Out of this ought to come a deep thankfulness for what God has done. It wasn't me. It wasn't us. It was God who did these things. And, when we get through those dark valleys and when we see our problems defeated, it is a thankful heart that recognizes only God could have done this. Only God could have helped us.

Fear drives us away from God and faith draws us in to God. We must wonder how many battles the Lord has fought for us in the past. We must wonder had it not been for the Lord, where would we be today. We must wonder how God wants us to love Him and trust Him.

Things were bad for Israel. They were very bad. But Israel had one thing in their favor, the Almighty God. With God, all things are possible. The world loves to remind us how terrible problems are. The world wants us to know that the enemy is fierce. The world wants us to know that we don't have any hope. What the world forgets about is the Amazing God who goes before us.

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