



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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JUMP START #343

2 Cor. 5:9—“therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him.”

This is a great passage! It’s packed full of great expressions, “ambition,” “home or absent,” “pleasing to him.” If we could but live by this passage, life would be easier for us. This passage sets before us what is important and what God desires.

Paul begins by talking about ambition. Ambition is the fuel in the tank. It is what drives us. It’s what keeps a college student going. It’s what gets many of us out of bed on Monday morning. Behind ambition is the idea of wanting to get better. A better education...a better job...a better career. Ambition can be selfish. It can also be worldly. And more than that, it can get us in trouble. Ambition is the “aim” in life. It’s not the target. Ambition is what you point to. Now if my aim is to be rich and to spend, spend, spend, then I have the wrong target. That’s not what life is all about. In this passage, Paul was aiming at God. His ambition was to please God. That is what kept him going after being persecuted and beaten. He had a goal, he had a drive and that was to please God. Without ambition, we tend to just drift with the current. We tend to get lazy.

Home or present. Paul is not talking about being on vacation. The “home or present” concept began in the chapter before. Paul is talking about in our bodies or after death being home with God. What he is saying is, whether here (which is now) or in Heaven (which is then or later) we want to please God. We want to please God all the time, everywhere. It’s not the thought that I want to live like a sinner and die like a saint—that doesn’t happen. It’s not that for now I want to do what I want to do, but when I die I’ll do what God wants. That doesn’t fly, either. Paul wanted to please God—now, while he was alive. Paul wants to please God after he is home in Heaven. He wants to please God.

(over)

Finally, “pleasing God.” A person does that by doing what God wants. We often think that God likes what we like. Wrong. Husbands and wives understand that doesn’t work. God is so much bigger and his thoughts so much higher than our thoughts that without God telling us what he wants, we’d come up with the wrong idea every time. God reveals what pleases him. He wants us to obey him and follow his will. Doing things contrary to God’s will is not going to please him. In worship, we must worship the way God has defined. In everyday living, we must see what God wants for his people. This is what pleases God. It’s not thinking up some new and novel way of doing things. Parents understand this. When you ask a child to do something and they go out of the way to do it, you are pleased. Now if they were to do something else instead, even though it may be nice, but they didn’t do what you asked, it doesn’t make you happy. They should have done what you asked. That’s why you said it in the first place. Is it any different with God?

Our ambition, whether at home or absent, is to please God. Pleasing God, that’s our life’s statement and mission. When we please God, everything else will be OK. You may not have the million dollars, but if you please God, you have God and Heaven will be your home. The opposite is you’ll have a million dollars and God won’t be happy with you and you won’t have God or Heaven.

Ambition brings the idea of thought, planning and targeting. Some of us live by the “to do list.” Each day we make a list of what we need to get done. That keeps us organized, focused and helps us accomplish what needs to be done. Pleasing God should be on the list. It should be at the top of that list. Start the day with the idea that I want to please God. Please him in my attitude ...please him in my behavior...please him by telling others about him...please him by the choice I make today...please him by talking with him....please him.

We ask our children, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” Paul reminds us adults, “our ambition is to please God.” Sometimes we forget. We need to be reminded.

Roger Shouse

Some additional thoughts:

Monday- Psalm 69:30,31

Tuesday- Prov. 16:7

Wednesday- Gal. 1:10

Thursday- Col. 3:20

Friday- Heb. 11:6

Saturday- 1 John 3:22

