



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 #279

1 Kings 3:24,25- “And the king said, ‘get me a sword.’ So they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, ‘Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.’”

Our passage today comes from one of the great stories of the Bible. It demonstrates the wisdom of Solomon. Solomon was the son of King David and after David died, Solomon became the king. God granted him a wish. Solomon chose wisdom. And now he is faced with a situation in which he has to use that wisdom.

Two prostitutes who lived alone in the same house, both had babies, just three days apart. One of the mothers accidentally rolled over one baby while it was in bed with her, and the baby died. That mother then switched babies and took the live baby. Both mothers claim the live baby is hers and the dead baby belongs to the other. So they come before the King to settle the matter.

Today, a DNA test would be done and the case solved. Solomon didn't know about DNA. Both women present their side of the story. He doesn't know. One is lying, he's just not sure which one. His wisdom leads him to this, split the child in half, and give each a half. The result would be that both babies would be dead, and neither would have a live baby. The mother of the dead baby agreed to the plan. She is a lying prostitute who is willing to allow an innocent baby to be killed—what a twisted and sorry character she is. The mother of the living child protests. She is willing to surrender her parental rights and give the child to the other mother if it meant sparing the child's life. Her concern was with the child. Solomon saw that. He awarded her the child. I'd hope that this woman found new housing arrangements after that.

Solomon's wisdom test was really a test of his character. Even though both were shady in character, being prostitutes, one was dishonest through and through. Jesus said of the false teachers, “You will know them by their fruits.” He went on to say that a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. The character of a person is demonstrated by their actions. Young people get this mixed up and often adults do the same when it comes to talking about family members. I've heard people say, “he's really a good person,” he just happens to be in the back seat of a police car with handcuffs on. Or, he has just been kicked out of college. Or, he has just been fired, again. I knew a family in which an adult child was stealing from other family members by using their names and social security numbers to get

bogus credit cards with no intention of paying for what was purchased. The family was adamant that he was good at heart. Really? Didn't show it, did he?

Years ago, some came to the conclusion that they "just came that way." They'd use the expression, "bad seed," as if the person couldn't help it. All the other kids were honest, decent and noble, but this one, well, "He just came that way. But he's really good at heart." Get real!! No way. We don't come this way or that way, we choose and are influenced. A lack of training, terrible role models, ungodly influences, and a lack of Jesus running through the hearts in the home all play a role. Character is who you are—all the time. An honest person is honest, even when the police pulls him over, even when the boss calls him into the office. He's just that way. Sometimes he has to take his share of lumps for not doing what he should have, but he's honest to the core. The same goes for righteous and purity.

The prostitute whose child had died was not honest. Solomon found that out quickly. A dishonest person will lie to get out of trouble and they will cheat to get ahead. That is how they function.

God is more concerned about our character than anything else. Our character defines who we are. You'll notice that Peter says, "Be holy as He is holy" not to do Holy things. A person can do Holy things without being holy. Be, means become.....it is a state of being. Our character will take care of our behavior, motives, attitudes, language and a host of other things. All of this tells me, I can sit in a church building every Sunday, even wearing a tie and everyone can think that I am a great Christian, but my character is what will show it. What do I do when I am not in that church building? How do I behave on the way home? What's running through my mind? What am I longing for? It's a matter of character.

Solomon could tell after a sword was handed to him. God can tell without a sword. There's no fooling God. Who you are is determined by what's inside of you. The more of Christ you put in you, the more he has an affect upon you. Good trees.....good fruit. That's just the way it is.

Roger Shouse