



# THE EXHORTER

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***“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](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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## JUMP START # 392

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***Acts 18:23- “And having spent some time there, he left and passed successfully through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.”***

Our verse today introduces Paul’s third preaching trip, often called, missionary journeys. He travelled long and far and endured much to preach Jesus Christ. One lesson this verse brings out is the importance of “strengthening the disciples.” This is found earlier in Acts, as well:

***Acts 14:22-*** “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’”

***Acts 15:32-*** “Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.”

Strengthening the disciples---that is a great concept and an important work. This is valuable because, this is how a church becomes strong in faith. To have a strong church, you must have strong members. Getting stronger just doesn’t just happen in time. Paul told the Ephesians to be “strong in the Lord.”

We need to be strong, because the spiritual battle before us is intense and tough. It’s not for the weak, they won’t make it. Satan doesn’t play by the rules and he is out to destroy. We need to be strong.

It is from strong members that our Bible class teachers come. It is from strong men that elders come. It is from strong members that the church remains on it’s true course. A study of church history will show that when false things were introduced and tried and accepted, it came from those not content with God’s way. Silent voices, weaker faiths and those that did not want to cause any problems stood by while the church changed directions, and after a couple of generations they left the path that God had set for it. We need stronger disciples.

The way to get stronger is more Bible, not less. More preaching, not less. More Bible studies, not less. More depth, not less. More teaching, not less. I’m seeing a trend where congregations for whatever reason are giving up preaching, and times together. Some say the distance is too much. Some say the crowds are too small. Having less isn’t the answer.

As we think about this, we must first ask ourselves, “Am I getting stronger spiritually?” Do I show in my faith, attitude, and behavior and actions that I am a stronger disciple today than five years ago? Simply going to church services isn’t the right answer. Some go, but they don’t get stronger. It’s a social thing. See my friends, play with the babies, have a good time, but my soul doesn’t get fed, it doesn’t get challenged, it doesn’t get stronger.

How does a person get physically stronger? You might say, "Hit the gym." Start running. Start lifting weights. It'll make you sweat. It'll make you sore and tired. It's hard. But those that stay with it, get stronger and stronger. At first, results are hard to see. But stay at it. In time it shows. I know a guy who decided to take up running. The first day, he ran to the mail box, and nearly died. The next day to the end of the street. That's all he could do. He hurt so bad. But he stayed with it. More and more. Today he's running mini marathons. He's in great shape. He's strong.

The same works spiritually. There's no magic plan, there's no great sermon that one time will get you where you need to be. You do a little, every day. Learn, apply, study, practice, do. It'll hurt. You'll want to quit. Satan will throw you curve balls to mess you up. But you stay with it. More,more. Reading the Bible. Learning the Bible. Teaching the Bible. Using other resources to help you, and in time you are going all the way down the street and back without feeling like you just died.

I wonder if we've gotten used to the preacher spoon feeding us? He does all the work...all the study and he tells us and that's all we need. Not a good system. We need to grow. We need to be able to do some preaching. We need to do some teaching. We need to know. The preacher can help, but it's not his job to get us strong, it's ours.

Strengthening the disciples....that's a great expression. Strong disciples that can recognize right and wrong. Strong disciples that can help others. Strong disciples that can carry on, when the apostles left those regions. Strong disciples that stand with the Lord.

We don't need more members, we need stronger members! Stronger members will lead to more members. More members without strength is a mess. It's babysitting. It's putting out fires. Strong members must have the heart of a servant....they are like Jesus.

What are you doing to make yourself stronger spiritually? What are you doing to help others get stronger? Things to think about!

Roger Shouse

**Some additional thoughts:**

**Monday-**Deut. 3:27,28

**Tuesday-** 1 Chron. 11:9,10

**Wednesday-** Luke 22:31,32

**Thursday-** Isa. 35:3,4

**Friday-** Joshua 1:1-6

**Saturday-** Eph. 6:10-13

