



# 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 #289

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**1 Timothy 4:16- “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”**

Our passage today is one of those “preacher’s verses.” It was written by the apostle Paul to the younger Timothy, who was preaching. The books of 1&2 Timothy are stuffed with things preachers ought to know and follow. One of the common threads throughout these thoughts is staying close to the word of God. Timothy was to remind the brethren. He was to instruct the brethren. He was to preach the word of God.

It is easy to dismiss these verses if you are not a preacher and think, “doesn’t apply to me,” but we remember that all Scripture is profitable. There are things all of us can learn.

I want to focus on the first part of our verse, “Pay close attention to yourself, and your teaching.” Watch yourself. Be careful. It seems that we are so quick to pay attention to other people. We seem to notice their faults, more than our own faults. We are critical when they mess up and seem to know exactly what they ought to be doing, which is usually what they are not doing. I guess that’s human nature, but it’s just not the way God wants things to be done. Pay close attention to yourself. Watch your words. Check your attitude. Are you where you ought to be? Is your heart right?

The expression, “close attention,” implies details, the small stuff, careful examination. Things bug us and irritate us. Should they? We can get mad fast and easily. Ought we to allow that? Close attention. I imagine a surgeon looking carefully inside the body. He’s not in a hurry. He’s looking carefully. I can see the drill sergeant looking over a line of soldiers. Examining each one in detail. Making sure everything is proper and right. It’s like a young man going out on his first date with a girl. He stares in the mirror for a long time, making sure everything is as good as it can be. Close attention.

James describes the disciple who not only hears but does the word of God as one who, “looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abide in it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25). There it is, “looks intently.” That’s like our “pay close attention to yourself.”

I wonder why folks don’t do that much? I hear parents just screaming at their kids, saying the most horrible things. I wonder if they are listening to what they are saying? Why don’t we pay close attention to our self?

Could it be we know? We know what the outcome will be and we just don't want to go there, so we don't. We know there is much improvement needed. We know that our attitudes stink and our behavior is sloppy before God, so we live in the land of denial and simply not "pay close attention to our self."

Could it be we have never been trained to do this, or we never thought about this? Maybe we grew up in a home that constantly chewed up other people, including brethren, and we thought that's what is normal. Many TV shows seem to thrive on that concept.

Whatever the reason, we need to do as Paul and James tells us. We need to pay close attention, to our self and God's word. If you don't, you will be a mess. You can become weak without realizing it. Your marriage can start to crumble without you noticing it and most importantly, your life will not look anything like Jesus Christ. Your influence will not be for good and you can even lose your soul eternally. This is serious stuff. Some are quick to point fingers. It's the church's fault. It's the kind of preaching we had. It's this or that. But you wonder, did they pay close attention to their soul? Did they recognize what was going on? Did they notice what they were feeding their heart every day?

Paying attention to anything takes time and effort. Some don't want to do it. They'd rather just sit in front of the TV until they fall asleep, every night. Paying attention means thinking about where you are going spiritually. What's going on in your heart? Years ago I sat down with a disciple that was discouraged. He was thinking about quitting. Many had talked to him. It was my turn. I asked him one question. I asked, "where are you and Jesus at?" He couldn't say anything. I thought maybe he didn't hear me. I looked at him, his head down and a tear coming down his cheek. He said, "no one has ever asked me that? All they care about is me coming back to church." We went on to talk about Jesus and how that is the most important relationship. He returned. The smile came back to his heart. He learned how to pay close attention to himself.

Pay close attention to yourself. Are you getting stronger spiritually? You can tell. Are you praying more diligently? You know. Are you walking with the Lord daily? Are you letting your light shine? Are you making a difference in the lives of others?

This is what close attention is about. It's that look within. It can be painful, but more so, it comes with adjustments. We think. We see. We adjust. We become closer to Jesus. Do you like how you are turning out?

Stuff to think about. Good things to roll through your mind as you drive. Turn the radio off and pay attention ---first to the road, then to yourself. It'll do you good.

Roger Shouse