



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 #277

Rom. 12:11- “Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

Here at the end of Romans 12 the apostle Paul give what we call today a series of “bullet points,” about our duty as Christians. One will find 13 of these short admonitions in this section. Our verse today, contains three of those bullet points.

Paul’s point throughout this chapter is to illustrate and define that as Christians we have responsibilities to both God and the church. We forget that sometimes. We do that in our marriages. At the wedding we make all those promises to our new mate, but after a few years, a few kids, we start thinking only about self. We get bored, tired, and unhappy. We think, I didn’t sign up for all of this. A cartoon illustrated this well when a lady was telling a marriage counselor, “I got married for an ideal, it became an ordeal, now I want a new deal.” And in a marriage, we tend to see the mistakes of our mate and their failures and either overlook ours or worse, use their failure to stop doing what we should.

Paul’s words in our verse are not about marriage. It’s about our relationship with one another in a church, but often we treat it the same. Some look for a church that will give them what they want. I want a fun church. I want an exciting church. I want a church that does this and that. But in all of this, what are they planning on giving the church? That thought doesn’t enter our minds much these days. It’s like the old image of a guy hitch-hiking. Today, we would never stop and pick someone up for fear he’ll kill us, but years ago, many hitch-hiked. They’d stand along the highway with their thumbs sticking out, wanting a ride. They want you to go the direction they are wanting, you to drive, and you to use your car and gas, and when you have taken them as far as they want to go, they want out. That is the thinking some have with the church—they want the church to give, provide, be there, do this and that, without being counted upon or adding anything in return.

Paul’s wonderful Roman section shows that God expects us to be dependable, and responsible to one another. Our verse today hits at the motives or the spirit in which things are to be done. Notice the words Paul uses here:

- Not lagging behind- you get the image of a group traveling and there is always a straggler, someone not keeping up. Don’t do that, Paul says, Keep up. Stay with them.
- Fervant in Spirit- we get the word “fever” from this word fervent. James uses it to talk about prayer, “the fervent prayer of a righteous man.” (James 5:16) Paul is talking about our

- passion and our intensity. Hot. Burning. Passionate. Excited. Thrilled. The Psalmist said, “I was glad when they said ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord.’” (Psa. 122:1) You can tell when someone is glad to be at a place and when someone showed up because they had to. I’ve done both. I’ve attended my wife’s high school reunion—I wasn’t a happy camper. Didn’t know anyone, felt out of place and went because she wanted me to. Wasn’t one of the highlights of my life. Then I have been to my kids weddings—WOW. You couldn’t keep me away. If my car had broken down, I’d of walked there. Big difference in spirit and attitude. This is what Paul is talking about spiritually. Passionate preaching....passionate singing....passionate praying....why? Because we love the Lord.
- Serving the Lord- this is the third bullet point. We serve the Lord by serving one another. We are to do this, not lagging behind, like we hate it, but fervent in the spirit.

All of this shows us two important thoughts. First, we have a responsibility toward each other. In a church, we are connected to each other and what we do has an effect upon one another. What are we supposed to do? Read this section of Romans 12. Paul lists many things. It is summed up in “serving the Lord.” Jesus said in Matt. 25, the way we treat one another, is how we treat him. This tells us that church isn’t about me—it’s about God and my helping others. Now that’s different! You don’t hear people talking that way much these days. They leave because, “no one talks to me,” or, “no one invited me,” or “no one will be a friend,” which I always find strange. Those that generally say that, are the first ones to leave after services are over, never stick around, and rarely allow themselves to get connected to others. We need to get kicked in the pants once in a while. And we need hugs and encouragement. It’s tough out there and we need each other. Paul’s words remind us that I need to serve my church family.

Secondly, Paul drives at the attitude or spirit of this. Be passionate, don’t lag behind. Those words show excitement and the charge in our batteries.

We sing, “Bless be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.....” I love Sundays. My favorite day of the week. I wish everyday was Sunday—and one of the best reasons is that I get to be around my church family. Amazing people. Incredible people. God’s people. Get that connection.....you need it to get through life!

Roger Shouse