



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)

January 13, 2013

JUMP START #532

Psalms 23:4 *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."*

Going through the valleys is part of life. We have to journey through them. There are no ways around them and besides, if we are following our Shepherd, He leads us through them. Yesterday, up in Indianapolis, I preached the funeral of a sweet Christian lady. She was one of my early Bible class teachers years ago. Her son and his family are very dear to my family. That evening, I went to another funeral home. Another friend's father had passed away. Another friend, who had worked several years at a company, lost his job. Tough times for those families. Those long journeys through the valley can seem long and dark. Tears come to the eyes. Uncertainty fills the heart. Why does life have to be like this?

Jesus ended His great sermon on the mount with the story of two men who built their houses—one upon the rock and the other upon sand. Both men experienced wind, rain and floods. Both men. Not just the sand man, but the rock man did as well. Storms come. It is those times that we really rely upon our faith. It is those times that we really trust in the Lord. It is those valley times that distinguish a real faith in the Lord and an academic knowledge of the Bible—those two are not the same. The difference is noted especially during the storms of life.

Just about any one can be a sunshine Christian. Health in the body, money in the bank, secure job and marriage, a car starts every time, and we'll walk through the day with a smile on our face. That doesn't take much to do that. Just about anyone can do that. It's the other kind of days that really show what we are made of. How do we do in the valleys? How are we with storms?

We remember that God's love is not determined whether we are in a valley or a mountain top. We remember that God is on the throne. He's always there, even when it seems that the world is falling apart, or at least we are, He is still in control. He is always at the helm. Storms and valleys do not take away from what He promised, nor do they defeat what He has said.

People seem to watch us more carefully when we are going through a valley. They notice our attitudes, our words, and how we handle things. Going through the valley isn't just for us, it's for others who watch us. Our children, even the grown ones, learn as they watch us in a valley. Those that know us are often encouraged because of the way we conduct ourselves in storms and valleys. They see spiritual strength in us. They see us praying more. They see us spending time in the Scriptures.

Life would be awesome if it wasn't for the storms and valleys. I sometimes wonder if I'd think less about Heaven if I didn't have a few valleys and storms. Those ugly times make our hearts long for the world in which there will be no pain, nor sorrow, nor death. We can't ever forget our Heavenly home. We must never become satisfied with this place. We are pilgrims here, not natives. This world, as we often sing, is not our home. Valleys and storms do a great job of getting that point across.

A friend buried his mother, another friend buried her father, and another friend lost his job—all of these friends are Christians. They are going through valleys and storms. I watched all of them and witnessed incredible faith, an undying hope in our Savior, a confidence that God will help them through these times, and a strength that was impressive. They will endure these storms and be a better people. They will not crumble under worry, fear or hopelessness. Not these people. They are rock people—their houses are built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and nothing will shake those homes.

It's awesome to witness folks doing right, having faith and being spiritual giants. They remind us that valleys and storms do not have to defeat us nor destroy us. They show that one can make it to the end of the valley. They show us that we can do the same. They remind us that they were never alone—God was with them, as this passage promises. What these families did was build a solid foundation upon Christ in the good times. They learned, listened, studied and developed their faith in Jesus Christ. They didn't wait until they were in the valley, nor when the winds started blowing to begin their faith. It's too late then. They built and built that foundation during the sunny days. And now that they are going through some dark days, they will be standing strong in the Lord. The Lord will get them through us, because they have been walking with Him all along. That's the difference!

Storm clouds are building on the horizon... there is no reason to fear. God is with you! Are you with Him?

Roger Shouse

 [Join Our Mailing List](#)

 [Forward to a Friend](#)