



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 #489

Romans 16:7 "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."

Romans 16 reads like a roll call. Schools take attendance. Some congregations do the same. We sing a hymn that states, "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there." Revelation tells us that God has a book and if your name is in that book, meaning, you have chosen to walk with Christ, you will be in Heaven.

Paul's list of many names, most we cannot pronounce easily, is not for the sake of attendance, as it is identifying those that made a difference to him personally. These are the ones that he could depend upon and were there when he needed them. Some, like Prisca, risked their necks for Paul. Others, like Junias in our passage, were arrested and imprisoned along with Paul.

The story of Andronicus and Junias is lost to history. Their names, nor their stories are not found elsewhere in the Bible. They lived, loved and walked with the Lord. They did what they could do. They were not ashamed of their faith. They were arrested. We don't know how the story ends for them. Were they executed? Did they gain their release?

Why did God put their names in the Bible? Why use paper and ink on names that were so soon forgotten? Could it be that you and I are more like Andronicus and Junias than anyone else?

Common, simple people with an unbelievable faith in Jesus Christ. They were known to Paul. I don't know if the Ephesians knew them, or the Thessalonians, but Paul did. Most of us are not known very far outside of our home congregation. We travel from one coast to the other and worship with a congregation on a Sunday, and few, if any know us. I think that's Junias. Back home, in our congregations, we do what we can. People count upon us, we serve in what ever way that we can. We try to be dependable, trustworthy and a good example. The preachers are known throughout the country. Many elders are known in many places. But the Junias' are not. Yet their work is extremely important and they are the life of a congregation.

I know some "Junias'" where I worship. They carry different names, such as Sam or Billy, or Gary, or James, or Brian, or Mark, or Greg or many, many others I could list. Take them out of our congregation and drop them two states away and people would not know them. But back home, they are like Junias-faithful, dependable, loyal, hard working, God-loving, and serious about going to Heaven. They greet visitors with a

smile. They make sure all the buttons are turned on and everything is just as it is supposed to be. You can count on them-they are always there. Ask them anything, and they will do it.

Paul said his "Junias" was outstanding among the apostles. My "Junias" are outstanding to the church where I worship. I dare say, in every congregation you've got folks just like that. They quietly walk through life doing what they can. If you make any fuss about them, they'd say that they are simply doing their job. Most congregations would collapse without these backbone people. The attention goes to the preacher and elders, often too much attention, yet it's these Junias' that are steady, reliable and hard working. Just doing what they can.

In many ways, shouldn't all of us be like that?

- Dependable-folks know that if you're not at church, you are either out of town or sick. Not everyone's like this. Some are like the weather. They come and go and you never know when they are going to be there.
- Hard working-that's what made Junias outstanding among the apostles. Hard working for Jesus. Finding what you are good at and doing it. Too many are idle. Too many are waiting for someone to tell them what to do. If you are good at cooking, share your food with others. If you are good with fixing things, go fix things for others. If you are a writer, send some cards. If you don't know a stranger, invite folks to services.
- See what needs to be done. They have their eyes opened and notice things, even simple things. A piece of trash doesn't belong on the floor. My Junias' will pick it up and put it in the trash can. They will open doors for someone with a walker. They will walk someone to their car with an umbrella when it's raining. They have a heart of a servant, like the Lord, they love.
- Loving things that are right. My Junias' love preaching and for some reason, they love my preaching. They make sure I know it. Every preacher needs that. Every eldership needs that. There's enough problems and junk to discourage anyone, and often the praise runs a little thin. Not in the heart of a Junias. I expect the reason Andronicus and Junias were in prison with Paul had something to do with Paul. They loved him and wanted to help him. Maybe they couldn't preach. Maybe they weren't chosen to be inspired, yet they could show their love for the Lord by caring for God's people-all of them.

Every congregation needs a Junias. It's not easy. You can't come to services late all the time and be a Junias. They are the ones' who are there early to help others. You don't peal out at the last amen. No, most Junias' I know are about the last to leave. It takes time. It takes service. It takes heart. What do they get out of this? First, they make a huge difference in the life and atmosphere of a church. It simply wouldn't be what it is without them. Second, God knows. And when that roll is called, God knows those who loved Him so much that they tried to make things better for others.

You have Junias in your life. You may not have stopped to recognize it, but you do. The greater thought though is this, what's it going to take for you to be a Junias to someone else? God is counting on you and wants you to do what you can. He's not expecting the impossible, just be a Junias in your own way. Put others first. Think about how you can make things better. Be kind. Be helpful. Be there.

Outstanding among the apostles...and in our time, outstanding among God's people...and in my case, outstanding to me!

Thanks!

Roger Shouse (and Joe Stuve)

