



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 #379

Psalm 31:23,24- “O Love the Lord, all you his godly ones! The Lord preserves the faithful, and fully recompenses the proud doer. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord.”

Our verse today comes at the end of this Psalm of David. It was a 911 call to God. He states that he has been in affliction **v7**, been in distress **v9**, terror is on every side **v13**. David was scared. He was confident that God would help him and be a guide to him. He never gave up on God.

The final verses, our passage for today, speak of a spirit of optimism and hope in God, a hope in the midst of trouble. It sounds as if David is telling this to himself first, but more so, to those that were with him. As King Saul chased David throughout the countryside, trying to kill him. David had an army with him. He was not alone. He felt responsible for them. These are words that would help those with him.

Notice the declarations from our verses: LOVE THE LORD, BE STRONG, TAKE COURAGE, HOPE IN THE LORD. David was building up the spirits of those with him. This was more than a pep rally cry, this was faith building. There was substance behind these words. Walking with God brings this kind of hope and courage.

We need to take these words to heart ourselves. We don't live in optimistic times. People love to complain, point out what is wrong, and live with a dark cloud above their heads. That thinking affects the attitude, the performance and behavior of people. More than that, it affects their faith in God. Negative living leaves us with a knowledge of God in our heads, but a doubt in our hearts. We struggle with the idea that God will do anything for us. Surely not us, he doesn't care that much about us. Not so. He does.

The people of God ought to walk through the day with a hope that can only be found in God. A hope that holds us like an anchor. A hope that is seen by others. A hope that makes a difference. This hope is built upon the teachings of God's word. It's not crossed fingers and selfish wishes, but trust in the promises of God. Promises such as he will not allow us to be tempted more than we can handle. Promises such as he is coming again. Promises like the assurance of forgiveness if we follow him. These promises make a difference. They show God cares for us, even us.

It is easy to get excited and have a pep rally spirit but those things are all hype and never last. Some churches thrive on that. They get the crowd all excited and by the time the people get to their cars in the parking lot, it has gone away. It is external, based on emotions. The music, the excited speaker, and the mood of the hour, becomes contagious. That spirit spreads through the audience. Everyone gets

pumped up. The bucket is passed and people drop a bunch of money in. Everyone is on board. Let's go. Then these people go home. The kids are fighting, there is stuff to do and you really don't feel like it, and reality hits. The hip and the hype are all gone. Returning is the sad and miserable spirit you had before.

This is not what David was talking about. This is not the direction of the Bible. Faith in God will make you passionate about God, but it is an internal not an external thing. It is not based upon what is happening around you, but what is in you, your faith and trust in God. Unlike the hype of some places, this lasts. This affects your outlook, your heart, and your head.

Places that put all the emphasis on the external are missing the point. Faith is built upon the word of God. More Bible, not less is the answer. More preaching, more classes, more reading the Bible. Hope comes from faith.....faith from the word of God.

Love, strength, courage and hope—those are the words from our verses today. Those are the characteristics of a person walking by faith in God. Those are the words that stay, even when the storms get darker and the outlook is gloom. God is there, and faith in him will get you through.

Roger Shouse