



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 #444

1 Thess. 4:13—*“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.”*

Today we will consider those who have hope. Hope in Christ. That hope is available to all. God wants you to live with that hope.

Here in this passage, Paul is talking about the death of Christians. The living were grieving the dead. Some things do not change. We do that today. Death is ugly. Death steals. The grieving of these Christians was done in hope. They were sad, yet they had hope.

How is it that Christians can grieve in hope?

- First, they realize that death is not the end of the road. The separations they feel now, will not last forever. Paul reminds them that when Christ comes, he brings with him those who have departed. The souls of the departed live on.
- Second, not only are the righteous dead living, living with God, there is hope of seeing them again. The grand reunion in Heaven—what a wonderful time that will be! It is a very common question that folks ask often, “Will we recognize each other in Heaven?” I believe the answer is YES. The rich man and Lazarus still had their identity after death. For a moment, think about the opposite—they won’t recognize each other. Can you imagine being somewhere in a large crowd, Revelation says the number is so large that it cannot be counted, and you didn’t know anyone? I have been in a few settings like that. Very awkward. No one to share things with, everyone a stranger. Is that the concept of Heaven? Heaven is fellowship, closeness, love, being with God. Will I recognize family members? I believe yes. Will I recognize heroes of the Bible, such as David, Paul, and Abraham? I believe yes. Will I recognize fellow Christians that I have that I have worshipped with? I believe yes. This is why Paul was comforting these Christians in this passage. They were grieving. Paul assures them that they will come with Christ. What’s the point if I won’t know who they are? For Christians it is never “good-bye” but rather, “see you later.”
- Thirdly, there is hope in that all that suffering would end. Much of the suffering we read about among the Christians was in connection to their faith. They were persecuted and tortured. For the departed righteous that page of their lives was finished. No more. Revelation reminds us that there are no tears, no death in Heaven. All of the problems stop at death. That’s comforting. Just hang on and this stuff that bothers you will soon be over. Not so for the unrighteous. Living without Christ, living to themselves, only adds more burdens, remorse and problems AFTER death for them. The illustration of the rich man and Lazarus shows that. Whatever health problems Lazarus had, covered with sores, probably leprosy, ended at death. He was in comfort. He was in the care of God. The rich man, was just the opposite. His selfishness, stubbornness, and stinginess caught up with him after death, his problems multiplied.

Hope-- there is hope, even in death for the Christian. This is why we must stay with the Lord and not be weary. As the song goes, "We are marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion....."

Roger Shouse