



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 # 364

Romans 12:12 *“Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer”*

Last week in our Jump Start we looked at the verse before where Paul said, *“Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”* Our verse today, adds three more action bullet points to Paul's description of a Christian. A Christian is rejoicing, persevering and devoted. A Christian has hope, tribulation, and prays.

Simple thoughts. Godly characteristics. But what a difference these make when we manifest these qualities.

It is interesting that the first two are given to us. We have hope because of Christ. Our hope is an anchor the book of Hebrews tells us. That anchor that keeps us from drifting away. That anchor that holds us steady when the tide rolls in. Hope. Hope for Heaven. Hope to see God's face. The Christian rejoices in this hope. Can you imagine Heaven? Think about that for a moment. What if this morning you woke up in Heaven? What do you think you'd see? Who do you think you'd see? The sounds. The people. The glory. That is your future if you stay with Christ. That ought to make us rejoice.

Tribulation is something else that comes our way. It is not something that we seek. Tribulation is troubles. Some trouble is generic and comes to all people in an area. A tornado sweeps through an area and levels every home on a block, it does this damage without regard to the faith of the people living there. Then there is the tribulation that is unique to being a Christian. We generally call it persecution. It comes. Paul experienced it. Peter talked about it. Many of us understand it. The looks. The whispers. The loud sighs. The tensions. The being ignored. The being left out. It happens. Paul says the Christian preserves. The Christian keeps going. Sure it hurts. Sure it makes you feel awkward. Sure it's uncomfortable. But the apostles went through

it. Our Lord went through it. The prophets of old went through it. We too, can go through it. The pressure is harder on some than others. It hurts when family turns against you. But you keep going. You have to. Christ is right, and the way of the cross leads home. Persevering is based upon convictions. You believe and so you stand. You believe and so you act.

Then Paul says, "devoted to prayer." Praying follows tribulations. That's natural and the way it ought to be. When the world rejects, our response is to pray. Asking God to help. Asking God for courage. Asking God to work on the hearts of others. Pray, not just now and then, but devoted to praying. Some folks are devoted to exercise. Every day they walk. In the winter, in the hot summer, in the rain, nothing will stop them. They are devoted. The Christian is like that with his prayers. He is devoted. There is so much to pray about. This world is a mess. There is a prayer. Our country needs help. There are prayers to be said. There are those who are having a hard time. There are prayers to be said. Some are struggling in their marriages. There are prayers. Some are out of work. Prayers. Then there is our church. Prayers. The leaders need prayers. The preachers need prayers. The young families. The senior citizen. The sick. The shut-ins. Now we haven't even talked about our selves yet. We need prayers. Pray for wisdom, James wrote. We need prayers for health, safety and forgiveness. We need to ask God to be patient with us. We need prayers to see opportunities about us.

How about taking a morning and praying as you drive to work? No radio on. No cell phone calls. Just you and God starting the morning. How about praying on your way home. Praying for the family that you are coming home to. Praying on the way to the church building. Praying on the way to the doctors office. You start doing this and before long, each journey you take includes a prayer. How refreshing this would be. How helpful this would be. Devoted to prayer. Dedicated to prayer. Committed to prayer.

Three simple expressions but powerful and packed with wonderful thoughts and insights.

Rejoicing, persevering and devoted. Not hit and miss. Not once in a while. Steady. Consistent. Faithful. That's what God is looking for. How are you doing with these? Get started. Count your blessings. Thank God for the day. Keep your eyes alert, Satan's nearby. Keep going.

Roger Shouse

