



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 # 1053

Psalms 71:5 “For You are my hope; O Lord God, You are my confidence from my youth.”

Our verse today reminds us that God is our hope. He is our confidence. Other places in Psalms would refer to God as our strength and shield. God is called a refuge. He is our help. It is not the within us, but from God that hope arises.

What is there to hope for?

Some are looking for better days ahead. Others are looking for more health. Some are looking for peace. Some are wanting a better marriage. Some are looking for a way to break free from an addiction. Some are longing for a real and close relationship with the Lord.

The real hope in God is forgiveness, righteousness and a home in Heaven. That hope is built upon faith and trust in the Lord. Not every day will be an easy day. Not everything will go my way. There will be things that seem unfair and flat out not right-but they do not take away my hope.

Later this morning, there is going to be a funeral in the Indianapolis area for a vibrant, cheerful, charming and wonderful woman. She touched many lives for good. She had a marvelous influence and impact upon others. She was the wife of a gospel preacher. She had a long eight year battle with cancer. She died last Sunday at the young age of 42. She leaves two children and a husband. Her family is amazing. Their faith is strong. She endured much. Now her battle is over. For some, they will think, she lost. For the faithful, she won. What is our hope? A long life that ends up on the back porch in a rocking chair watching the sun set? Is our hope a bank full of investments so we can do what we want? Is our hope, escaping all the troubles that others have? That's fantasy, not Biblical hope. Our hope is in the Lord. Our hope is to be with Him. Our hope is a Heaven than can never ever be taken away from us. Our hope is forever with God.

Death at any age is hard and sad. Death without hope is the worst of all. I have preached too many of those funerals. A person doesn't have any time or interest in God or the Bible while he is alive. The moment he dies, the family begs that a preacher puts him in Heaven by saying the right words at a funeral. This is a joke. It doesn't matter what the preacher says. God determines where we go based upon our life choices. A life without God becomes an eternity without God. Burning candles, dancing to the moon, reading Bible verses- none of that will change a person's destiny once they have died. Had they lived by faith, walked with the Lord, obeyed God and held on to a Heavenly hope-their destiny is promised by God.

God is our hope. He will not magically lift you up out of a hole that you have dug. But with you, He will help you. With you, He will give you a new chance. With you, He will guide you and lead you all the way to Heaven. You can't live like a sinner and die like a saint. Doesn't work that way. Hell's real. Jesus believed in it and warned about it. In most modern churches today, the only time the word "Hell" is mentioned is when someone is cussing. Too many preachers have moved on from that subject. They've outgrown Hell. They influenced a congregation in believing that God is too loving for Hell. So, folks drinking these false ideas, live with a fake hope. They think that they can go to church whenever they feel like it, and most times that's not very often. They are convinced that they are pretty good people. They have no concept of righteous ways, righteous thinking or righteous lives. They walk where they want to, do whatever pleases them, and follow the god called happiness. They own a Bible but couldn't tell you anything about it. For them, church is about coffee, free donuts and a few laughs. This misguided world, led by incompetent church leaders, is building a generation with false hope. This is NOT what our verse is talking about. This is not a hope like the Easter bunny or the tooth fairy. Our hope is real. Our hope rests in God.

Real hope comes from following God. Real hope comes from making righteous choices based upon the Bible. Real hope lies in the grace and forgiveness of God. Real hope is connected directly to the Bible. Real hope lies in the real God. Real hope leaves a trail of footprints that others can follow. Real hope is about prayers, worship, and godly living.

When one passes away who was a true believer and follower of Christ, their hope is sure and bright. Their death, though sad, brings joy because we know that they are with the Lord. We know from what the Bible teaches that they are better now than they have ever been. They have entered the beautiful home of God. They wouldn't come back if they could. They'd tell the rest of us to hurry up and get there. There is a satisfaction about one of God's children making it home. Safe. Protected. Joyous. There is a tug on our hearts to want to be with them.

This is what living with hope means. It's seeing beyond the mundane things in life that can get us off track and slow us down. It's keeping our eyes upon Jesus. It's realizing no matter what happens to me today, it's ok-I know sooner or later, my journey ends at home with God. My heart, my citizenship, my place is in Heaven. We live as if one foot is already there.

The answer to suicidal thoughts is hope in God. Not a plastic, fake hope. But a real, get down and roll up your sleeves, open up the Bible and dig in, faith bustin', God obeying, hard praying, righteous living type of hope. It's a hope for Heaven. It's a hope that is God promised and Bible backed. It's a hope that sees through shallow clichés and empty promises of man. It's a hope that is only satisfied in God.

It's a tribute and a triumph to know those who finished with such hope. Stacy was one of those. My heart hurts for her young family. My heart hurts more for those who do not know what she knew. She loved the Lord. She made choices based upon the Lord. She died in the Lord. Her hope, her way, her destination is in the Lord. Someday I plan to see her. Someday I plan to see others who have followed that same path of godly hope.

This is our calling. This is what it's about every day. The choices we make. The path we choose. The words, the attitudes, the things we let bug us-faith based and hope driven or stuck on this planet.

We sing, "This world is not my home..." and I'm glad it's not.

My heart, my hope, my home is somewhere else-it's in Heaven with God.

Don't you want to go there? Anchor yourself into hope of God.

Thanks Stacy, for your love, life and joy. Mostly, thank you for your hope in God.

Roger Shouse

