



# THE EXHORTER

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***“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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***John 16:21*** "Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world."

Our Bibles have many references to babies. God often uses babies as illustrations of great spiritual lessons for us. We learn things from babies.

The verse today is one such example. In the context, Jesus is telling of His coming death. He says:

- A little while, and you will no longer see Me
- You will weep and lament
- You have grief now

What they were experiencing was like a woman giving birth. There was pain, anguish and sorrow. His death would bring that. But the context also reveals the coming joy that would be when Christ was resurrected.

- In a little while you will see Me
- Your grief will be turned into joy
- I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice and no one will take your joy away from you

It will be like a woman who rejoices with the birth of her child. Once the child is in her arms, is healthy, the trouble of pregnancy and labor are soon forgotten. Most do not let the pain of childbirth keep them from having more children. It is worth it to have beautiful children.

There are other things in life that are hard, some even painful, but the results are so worth. I will not say that they are like childbirth, being a guy, not knowing what it's like, and not wanting to get dozens of emails reminding me that I'm out of my league and have no clue what I'm talking about. But here are some things that often involve pain but later turn to great joy.

(OVER)

Consider a few:

**1. The raising of children can be hard.** It wears upon the patience of parents. The fussing, the spills, the questions, the messes, the lessons that must be taught over and over. In the midst of this, parents can feel frazzled, frustrated and tired. Always tired. But the results are so worth it. Parents soon forget all the little things that irritate them when they see the joy of a child doing right. I spent a few days with a family recently. They had two adorable children, Parker and Natalie. Polite, well mannered, curious, fun, interested and a delight to their parents. They didn't come that way. It took some molding, shaping, polishing and work. They are not finished yet. There are still some wonderful experiences ahead such as driving, dating, marriage but the foundation blocks are being set already. It's easy to see that. Parenting isn't for the lazy, cowards, or those who are too into themselves. Parenting is seeing the big picture for those little hearts. I had a lot of fun with Mr. Parker and Miss Natalie, the few days I stayed with them. My kids are big now. Instead of me helping them, they help me now. My Joel was helping me move furniture last night. He's stronger than I am. He has such a good heart. He is a servant. The pain of parenting is forgotten when one sees the child who stands on his own faith, serving the Lord and doing what is right. There is great joy in that.

**2. The experience of learning to preach can be painful.** A young man who catches the desire to preach has much to learn. The process can be long and hard. There are so many things to learn. Not only must he learn the Bible, but he must learn to preach and teach it effectively. He must learn to be interesting. He must find his style, polish his delivery and learn to lead hearts to Jesus. He must know how to answer questions, especially from those who love to be obnoxious. He must learn how to deal with the guy who wants to dominate the class. He must learn how to deal with the person who tries to take the class down his own agenda. He must learn how to sit across a table and discuss the Bible with someone. He must learn how to comfort the hurting. What do you say at a funeral? What do you say at a funeral of someone you never met? What do you say at a funeral of someone who wasn't a Christian? Teaching forgiveness is easy until you have someone who has been hurt and they don't want to forgive. That young man who wants to preach struggles with his own fears and insecurities. He preaches and preaches and preaches. After awhile, he gets good. Before long, he says stuff that is really helpful and worthwhile. In time, he opens your eyes to ideas and understandings that you never realized. He's called upon by others to preach here and then there. He's gotten good. It took time. Those that have witnessed the journey and process smile with great joy.

**3. The death of a Christian fits in this setting.** A family says goodbye to a beloved parent or grandparent. Tears flow. Hearts are crushed. There is a funeral. There is a long, sad journey home from the cemetery. A chair is empty at the holidays. Songs, movies and special times of the year remind us of someone that we miss. But because they are a Christian, we know that they are with the Lord. The promise of God is true and sure. And as we walk with the Lord, a day will come when we will be united. Folks always ask, 'Will we know each other in Heaven?' Think about what the answer would be like if it was NO. Imagine being in a huge crowd and you didn't know anyone. Imagine you are there with a bunch of strangers. I've been in settings like that. Didn't like it. Was rather odd to me. Is that Heaven? Forever? No. Heaven is fellowship with God and His people. Fellowship is warm and sharing. Fellowship is about each other. Fellowship is love, joy and sharing. You don't do that with strangers. With strangers, we keep our distance. With strangers, we have our guards up. With strangers, we are careful. Heaven is not with strangers. It's with us. It's with the people we love and have worshipped with. It's with God's people, the best people on the earth. It's with righteous ones. So yes, we will know each other. The tears of a funeral, will be replaced with the hugs of reunion someday. This is true of those who walk with the Lord. A person doesn't go to Heaven just because they die. They are with the Lord because they have been with the Lord. The Lord has washed them, lead them and guided them. Their life and their death has been with the Lord. To those, death is never a goodbye. It's a see you later. It's a "be looking for me, cause I'm coming." The pain of death will be replaced with the joys of being together in Heaven. Never separated again. Never tears again. Never death again. Never having to be any other place.

Sorrow that becomes joy. There are things like that in life. What would you add to this list?

Roger Shouse