



# 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*

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**Romans 14:10** *“But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.”*

I was out preaching last night, one of my favorite things to do. The topic was, "The Certainty of Judgment." The Bible, from the Old Testament through the New Testament, tells us of the coming judgment. There's no getting around that fact. Few things are certain. There is no certain return on your money. The election isn't certain. In sports, no team is certain to win. Solomon expressed this when he wrote, "the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors...for time and chance overtake them all."

There are two possibly three things that are very certain. Jesus is coming. Until Jesus comes first, we will die. We will be judged by God. It's that last certainty that scares us and we don't like to think about it. We'd like to just bypass the judgment and go straight to Heaven. We want a divine "get of jail free card."

There are enough Bible passages that gives us reason to be scared about the judgment. Every idle word spoken will be given an account to God. We will be judged according to the things we have done, whether good or bad. Unless our names are written in the book of life, we will not enter Heaven. That's enough to make most of us be quiet. But then we add to this that we are judged by God's word-that perfect standard. The judgment is not a test, written or oral. It's an accounting of what we have done. Jesus said, "I was hungry and you fed Me. I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink." He didn't say, "Name the apostles." He didn't say, "Tell me the books of the Bible in order." It is what have you done. Your faith ought to have changed you on the inside and affected how you treat others on the outside.

Then we add to this that we will be judged by God. It's one thing to be judged by our peers. If our family judged us it wouldn't be so bad. Many of us have talked our way out of tickets and have gotten extended time when we missed deadlines. We have become pretty good at getting by with things. The judgment is not conducted by us, but by God. There is no one greater than God. This makes the judgment final. Who can you appeal to when God has declared you guilty? It all ends with God.

Then we add that we are all judged. Our passage says, "For we must all stand..." Other places state, "each one must give an account." It's one thing to be judged as a family or a church. It's one thing to be judged as a nation. But it's you by yourself. No family members. No friends. No one, but you.

There is enough in this judgment stuff to make us scared. The old preachers used to bang away on these type of lessons. "Hell, fire and brimstone" was the norm. We've moved away from that some and in doing so, we simply do not talk that much about the coming judgment. Paul did to Felix. **(Acts 24:25)** The Bible does to us.

(OVER)

All of this leads to the point that what we are doing matters. "It's my life and I can do what I want," changes when you realize that you will be judged some day. God sees and God knows. The judgment isn't a gathering of the facts, God already knows. It's not a determination process, as in our court systems in which evidence is presented, a prosecutor points to the reason why a person is guilty and a defense attorney tries to prove innocence. We have too much "Law & Order" in us and that skews our thinking about God's judgment. God already knows. You will not surprise Him at the judgment. He will not be shocked to find out some things. He knows.

This leads to one grand conclusion:

Without Jesus, we have no hope of Heaven. Without Jesus, we are not going to make it. Without Jesus, we will be lost. Without Jesus, our sin stained souls will be cast from the presence of God. Goodness simply isn't good enough. We must bow our hearts, bend our ways, and obey Christ. He must be our Lord. We must believe Him, trust Him and do what He says. Stop fussing about what God says. Stop arguing with the Bible. Stop looking for loopholes. Stop playing games with God. This is serious stuff. Believe Him. Trust Him. Obey Him. That includes being baptized for the remission of your sins, because He said so. Forgiveness and grace are the only hope that we have. They are only found in Jesus. Without Jesus, without forgiveness, without grace, we are doomed.

Understand that the sweet grandma that lives down the street isn't going to Heaven because she is nice. Either she is in Christ or she is not. Our culture doesn't like such language. Understand the military man who dies defending our country, who is a hero, doesn't go to Heaven because he died in service. Understand the police man who is killed saving others doesn't go to Heaven because he died in duty. Understand the person who has had a miserable life doesn't deserve Heaven. No one deserves Heaven. No one gets Heaven because of something heroic that they did. Heaven is for those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Heaven is for those who have walked with Christ. Heaven is for those who have made Jesus their Lord. They have shaped their lives around Jesus. They worshipped as God describes. They honor God in the way He wants to be honored. They have chosen to obey Him, follow Him and trust Him. Sinless they are not, but they are saved by the grace of God.

This is the only way that judgment doesn't totally scare us. Our hope is not that we have done everything right, because we have not. Our hope is not in doing more good than bad. Good deeds do not erase the bad. Only the blood of Jesus removes sins. Our hope is not in us. Our hope is in Christ. We have not done enough. We have been lazy. We have not made the right choices. We have fumbled way too many times. Through Christ, in Christ, by Christ-we have confidence. Jesus is the answer.

This is why we must change our lives. This is why we must tell others. This is why we must continue to walk with the Lord. There is no hope in us, it's Christ. It's not the church that saves us, it's Christ. Cling to the Lord. He is the only way that we can get through this.

In 1887, a man from Ohio, wrote a hymn. He wrote a song about the judgment day. The chorus of his song says, "There's a great day coming, a great day coming." He viewed the judgment as a Great Day. Most wouldn't put the judgment in the great day category. Most would say that it's the worst day of their lives. But for the Christian, for those who have walked with the Lord, that day will be great. It will be the day that we see the Lord. It will be the day that we bow before Him. It will be the day that we enter God's home. It will be a great day.

We need to be reminded of this. The forgiveness offered by God changes everything. Our faith in Christ changes everything.

You and I will stand before God someday. That's for certain!

God wants you with Him in Heaven. He's trying to get you there. You have to make the steps. Won't you open His book and open your heart?

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Roger Shouse

