



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 # 1480

Psalms 27:14 "Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord."

I thought of this passage last night. I was driving home on the highway and traffic was heavy. Suddenly we came to a stop. Both lanes, dead stop. Then we waited and waited. Most of us turned our engines off. Some turned around and drove in the grass the wrong way. It was dark. We must have sat there more than thirty minutes. I was bringing dinner home, so I went ate some of mine. Waiting and patience. It's hard for us.

Our passage written from David is about wanting deliverance. He was not stuck in traffic. He didn't have a cell phone to talk to others. He prayed. He prayed for God's help. He prayed and he waited. He knew God would help. God is good to His people. He had to wait and not give up.

This is a great lesson for us. It's not sitting in traffic that is our problem, well, not for most of us. It's waiting for our prodigal to turn around and come back to the Lord. It's waiting for a church to start doing right. It's waiting for prayers to be answered. It's waiting for our health to get better. These are all big things. These are the very things that keep us up at night. We pray and pray about these things. When these things are in our lives, most of us do not just say one little prayer. Rather, we pray and pray and pray about these things. We know the persistent widow and the importance of "bugging" Heaven with what bothers us. We understand the "Thy will be done" principle and would never want God to bend His will for us. We know those things. Still, we pray and we wait. The silence, the lack of an answer may be a test of our faith. It may a lesson in patience. It may simply not be in God's timetable. "In His time," is so often not in our time. We want answers within five minutes after we pray. We go asleep praying and hope the answer comes the next morning while we are having our coffee. But many times, we must wait.

Wait for the Lord...be strong and let your heart take courage. Don't give up. Don't doubt. Don't throw in the towel. Don't take matters into your own hand. Don't get desperate. Be strong. Let your heart take courage.

It seems that the "waiting" part and the "be strong" part go together. Those that can't wait any longer have given in to impatience and a weakening faith. Some want to jump ship too soon. They get scared. They feel that they are on their own. They start doubting whether or not God loves them or hears them. They manufacture all kinds of reasons why their prayer has not been answered. Most of the things that they come up with are not healthy, Biblical or wise. Those false thoughts just take them further from the Lord.

Be strong. The God that you love and trust in the sunshine remains the same in the storm and in the darkness. Be strong helps drive away worry. Be strong keeps doubt at bay. Be strong reminds you of your responsibilities with God. He still wants you to worship Him, even though you are waiting for His help. He still wants you to carry the character of Christ in your life, even though you wait.

(OVER)

There are others that need you. That can't be put on hold, just because you are waiting on God. There are people to be encourage. Some need to be taught. Life must go on. There are others around you that you must be an example to. How you carry yourself through all of this will be seen and remembered by others.

Now, what are some positive things that you and I can do when we are stuck in life. For me, it was sitting still in the dark on a highway last night. It might be a delayed flight. It might be road construction. It might be waiting on the kids at school. It might be waiting on a co-worker. It might be sitting in the doctor's office. There are a lot of "down time" in our lives. Modern technology makes it possible for us to talk to people, check emails, or even watch movies and TV while we are waiting.

How about using the "waiting" time to:

- Say some prayers. Think about all the folks that you know that need help. There are folks who are ill. There are folks who have walked away from the Lord. There are folks who are new. There are some who do not know the Lord. Use your waiting time as your "Closet" and say their names and pray about them.
- Use the time to count your blessings. Remember the hymn, "Count your many blessings, name them one by one..." Do that. Name them. We often start with the "biggies," such as our family, health and our jobs. But look around and name the forgotten blessings in your life. As you name them, thank God for them. Counting and thanking go together.
- Use your waiting time to work on memorizing verses. Pull a verse up on your phone and then work on saying it over and over.
- Use the down time to make a list, either in your mind, or physically, of spiritual things that you need to do. There are folks who need calls. There are some who need cards and visits. With our technology, you can do some of those things while waiting. Make a phone call or send a message to someone. Let them know that you are thinking about them.
- Take the time to do serious spiritual inventory. Look at what you are doing these days? Are you happy with the way you are turning out? Is God happy? What kind of legacy and footprints are you leaving for others to follow. What sins are plaguing you? What can you do with God's help to defeat those sins? Are you growing spiritually?

You'll find that these little exercises will help the time to pass, but they will also help you spiritually. You will find wonderful ways of using your time wisely. All around you will be impatient people. The world surrounds them and they cannot handle having to "wait." You on the other hand, find constructive and positive ways to better yourself because of the wait. Your busy life may have missed those opportunities had you not had to wait.

I never did find out why we were stopped on the highway last night. I assumed it must have been a pretty bad accident. That thought allowed me to pray for people that I didn't know. I prayed for their safety. I prayed for the first responders.

Wait...be strong...take courage-good thoughts for us as we travel about this day.

Roger Shouse

