



# 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](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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***2 Timothy 1:12 "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."***

I like this verse. It's like a suitcase that is so stuffed that one has to sit on it to get it closed. We notice the heavy use of personal pronouns. Paul refers to himself six times. Six times in one sentence. Out of 39 words, six of them are the pronoun, "I." I suffer. I am not ashamed. I know. I have believed. I am convinced. I have entrusted. Wow! That's a lot of action on Paul's part. His faith was not dormant. It wasn't God who was doing everything, either. This wasn't a one way street. Paul believed. Paul was convinced. Paul trusted. Paul knew.

Don't you wish you could say that? Sometimes, with us, it's just the opposite. I'm not sure anymore what I believe. I'm not sure that God will answer my prayers. I don't think God will help me. I don't know if I can hang on much longer. The Gospel of doubt leads to despair and defeat. This certainly wasn't the language of Paul.

A couple of thoughts here.

First, this amazing believer suffered. Paul began this sentence, "For this reason I also suffer these things." God was going to guard what Paul had entrusted to Him. That is stated deeper in the sentence. But this guarding didn't exclude Paul from suffering. The suffering Savior is followed by suffering saints. That's us. That's Paul. The light that we shine, often offends and blinds others. They don't want to see it. They want it turned off. They love the darkness more than the light. That's what Jesus says in John 3:19.

Some how we have gotten the idea that if I'm doing right, then my life ought to be amazing and trouble free. Paul's wasn't. He was considered the scum of the earth. I've never really looked up that word "scum." It reminds me of mold in a locker room. When a teenager I worked in restaurant. One of my jobs was to take a huge pot full of grease and dump it in a dumpster. It was so heavy I could barely carry it. I'm certain today we would be in all kinds of environmental trouble for doing that. The grease was hot, smelled and had what I think was scum floating on the top. Another lovely summer Job I had was working in a fishery. Gold fish were raised in a hatchery and then shipped all over the

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world. It was an amazing process. The fish would be brought in from the many ponds. They were sorted out in troughs. Dead fish were tossed into a large trash can. When the can was full to the top of dead fish, it was loaded into a really old dumpy pickup. When the back of the pickup was full of a dozen or so trash cans full of dead fish, it became my job to drive it up to a trash heap and pour the dead fish out. There was a mountain of dead, smelly fish. I only did that one time. I told the boss it was more than I could handle. They laughed but I didn't care. I have never smelled anything so bad as that mountain of dead fish. Scum. Paul told the Corinthians that he was the scum of the earth. God allowed that. There wasn't universities named after Paul, not back then. He was a hunted man.

Let's stop measuring how much we think God loves us by the quality of goodness in our lives. Paul had it tough, but the Lord sure loved him. The lovers of darkness may treat you like scum. That's ok. God loves you.

Second, Paul tells us that God is able to guard what we have entrusted to Him. God is able. That's the spirit of the three Jewish boys who stood before the Babylonian king. Our God is able to deliver us. Hebrews tells us that God is able to save those who draw near to Him. Jude tells us that God is able to keep you from stumbling. He is able. That's a great thought. Again, we might limit God. We may think that He is not able. He won't, we may say. But, He is able.

God is able to guard what we have entrusted to Him. What would that be? Our faith. Our hearts. Our soul. Our lives. God is able. God is able to help us. God is able to protect us.

The suffering Paul understood that God was able to guard that faith that he had. What was of most importance to Paul, was that faith. His life would be taken, but not his faith. His faith was securely rooted in the Most High.

A great passage about Paul. It helps us in troublesome times. We worry. We get scared. We wonder. Now, we know. We can know like Paul knew. We will suffer, but He is able to guard what we've entrusted to Him. We are not alone. We are not forgotten. What we are going through is not for naught. God knows.

Helpful thoughts.

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