



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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John 20:4 "The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first"

Excitement-it's more than an emotion, it changes our thinking and our days. Here where I live, we are expecting a massive snow storm today. Lots of snow is coming. The newscast has folks excited. Kids will be out of school, there will be rush on at stores to stock up on things and those that drive snow plows will be getting ready. Excitement. I was at a ballgame this week and saw a new Big Ten record for the most three pointers. That was exciting. When the new Star Wars movie opened, there was a lot of excitement. New babies bring excitement and joy. When a soldier returns home from duty there is a lot of excitement as he first greets his family. Baptisms are exciting.

Our verse today illustrates excitement. Jesus was dead. He was quickly buried. The disciples hunkered down through the Sabbath. As the first day of the week dawned, some women went to the tomb. They expected to find His body in the grave. They intended to further anoint it with spices. They even wondered how they were going to move the massive stone in front of the grave. As they reached the grave, the stone had been moved. Angels were present. They were told to go tell the disciples. John reports that Mary Magalene ran to tell Peter and the others. Peter and another disciple ran to the tomb. This is where our verse is found.

They ran. They were excited. They had to see for themselves. They didn't say, "When we get finished here and get around to it, we'll check it out." Nor, did they take a slow, casual walk, stopping to chit-chat with others along the way. They ran. They both ran. The other disciple, probably Mark, out ran Peter. Huffing and puffing, they looked into the tomb for themselves. There they saw the linen wrappings, but no Jesus. Later, they would encounter the Lord, risen and alive.

We do not have empty tombs to run into but there are plenty of things for us to be excited about spiritually.

First, the search for truth ought to be an exciting quest. Finding the answers that bug us and learning God's will leads us from one truth to another. That chase, that journey opens all kinds of doors. Often that experience can lead to big changes in our lives. As we learn the will of God and what God wants of us, doors open to better relationships. We become free from guilt as we obey the Lord. We become challenged to do things in the kingdom that we never thought we could. Learning and becoming are the wonderful and exciting aspects of studying God's word. Doubts evaporate away. Questions get answered. We move from fear and darkness to love and assurance. It is exciting! Bible classes are exciting!

Second, the worship and praise of God is exciting. I love Sundays! My church family knows that. I tell them that all the time. Sunday is the best day of the week. Things are different on Sundays. Our schedules are different on Sundays. We come together as a church on Sundays. We see each other on Sundays. We pray as a family on Sundays. We sing together. We remember the Lord's death together. We get our souls fed and our spirits lifted on Sundays. We learn that we are not alone on Sundays. Don't drag into the church house late. Get there early. Get there, not yawning and rubbing your eyes, but bright eyed and ready to go. We come to worship God! Exciting! Wonderful! Powerful! Some race out of the church building when services are over as if they can't wait to get out of that place. I hope that's not the reason. It ought to be just the opposite. We ought to be racing to get there.

Third, thoughts of Heaven ought to be exciting to us. When we realize that we, through God's grace, are going to Heaven, that ought to just fill our hearts and move us through the darkest of days. Heaven. God's home. We don't just get to walk through, as if on a tour. We don't stay for a weekend and then must go home. His home becomes our home. It is the final end of the journey. There is no other place to be. Home. Safe. Secure. Angels. Love. Righteous folks. God. Those thoughts ought to excite you. Don't you want to go there? Don't you wish we could go today? Sure there are things that we'd miss here, but nothing so great as to keep us from missing Heaven.

I think spiritual excitement was missing in many of the Revelation churches. Ephesus had lost their first love. Laodicea was lukewarm. Sardis was dead. These congregations were still meeting and worshipping and some were still walking through things God wanted them to do, but something was missing. It became more duty than love. It became more effort than it should have. What was missing was faith. What was missing was the excitement for the Lord. They no longer ran to the Lord, as Peter did in our verse. Shuffling through life, sighing, weighed down with burdens, tired, complaining, seeing nothing good, failing to count your blessings, no longer thankful-that's the image when I think of those churches. I see that same thing in the faces of some. They assemble because they have to, not because they want to. If God gave them the option, and they could find the verse that read, "You do not have to worship on Sunday," they wouldn't. They find and receive very little benefit from their relationship with God or their church family. It's just something that they have to do.

How sad. No one made them be this way. It was their choice. And, they are hurting themselves the most. They will not get it. They will not see what others see. They become poor representatives of God's kingdom. They are not the poster image of a successful and growing Christian. Guilt is what keeps them coming. They have just enough religion in them to keep from quitting, but not enough to make any positive difference in their lives. And, to the tone of this article, they are certainly not excited about the Lord.

Peter ran. The other disciple out ran Peter. Their minds were running faster than their legs. They got to the tomb and the stone was moved. They looked in and He was not there. Could it be possible? Did it really happen? Excitement!

How about you? Are you walking to God, slowly, going at your own pace, or are you running towards Him? Sunday is coming! Are you excited!

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