



# 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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***Ephesians 5:27 "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."***

Our verse today comes from the Ephesian section in which Paul compares the relationship of the church to Christ with marriage. As Christ is, so husbands ought to be. As the church is, so wives ought to be. It is a beautiful relationship of trust, and honoring the other.

What is unusual about this verse is that we expect the church to glorify Christ. Jesus is the Savior. He is the one who paid the ultimate price. The church is the people. At best, we are not the best. Yet, the verse states, "the church in all her glory." The church, God's people, are how many see God today. We are God's hands, feet and eyes. We are to be holy and blameless. We are a reflection of what and how we believe and we are a reflection of Christ.

It is that last statement, we are a reflection of Christ, that many do not seem to get these days. Once we leave the church building, IT DOES MATTER, what we do. We reflect Jesus. The problem in Corinth, with a man living with his father's wife, obviously a moral issue, was not something that was going on during worship. His choices of what he did once he got home, affected the church and reflected upon Christ. His choice to be immoral was a blemish. From this Ephesian passage, it was a "spot and wrinkle." It was not "holy and blameless." The church at Corinth sat on this. They did nothing. Under Paul's direction, discipline was required and the fellowship was to be broken. The Corinthian church was not holy and blameless with this obvious sinful activity going on.

We understand this principle in other contexts. Those that have traveled overseas, you leave an impression of what "Americans" are like by your behavior. If you are rude, the conclusion, right or wrong is, "Americans are rude." If you are demanding, it will be, "Americans are demanding." Although you are not on official business for the American government, conclusions are drawn by the way you behave and act.

The same thought is now carried out spiritually from our passage. Conclusions are made about the congregation you are a part of and about Christianity in general by your behavior. So, if you are demanding, selfish, having continual melt downs at work, or home, this is an impression that you leave with others. If you cross the line of right and wrong, the charge of hypocrisy is made. That little song that from Jesus' principle of influence, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine," speaks loudly. "Won't let Satan blow it out..." This is what we are driving at. Away from worship, are you spiritual? Do you blow up when driving? Do you explode at work? Do you bend the rules when you please? Do you do as you want? Do you even think about what you are doing and what affect it has on others? Do you realize that you may be creating spots and wrinkles in the holy body of Christ because you are doing what you want and you haven't considered being holy and righteous?

(OVER)

When away from home, these principles do not change. When at work, these principles do not change. Oh, the shallow thinking and ungodly crowd we surround ourselves with to justify doing things that we shouldn't. I've been told multiple times, that when you go to Europe, you have to drink wine. Everyone does. There is no getting around it. I've been to Europe twice. Never had a drop of wine. It can be done. I am to be a child of God that lets my light shine as much at work, on vacation as I am sitting in a pew on Sunday morning.

This is much bigger than attitudes, language and behavior. It's all about Jesus. Do I really love Him and believe in Him? If I do, then I can go to conduct myself as He would want me to be. PERIOD. The same principle applies to marriage. I am married. I love my wife. But, when away, if I flirt around, trash talk her, act like a single guy, it hurts her. It dishonors her. It shows no respect for our vows and the promises made at the wedding. If as a Christian, I act like I am not a Christian, then it hurts God. It dishonors Christ and His people. It shows no respect for God's word or my commitment or my faith.

Most of our problems with living as Christ wants us to does not happen during Sunday worship. It's pretty easy to be a Christian, when surrounded with Christians, who are engaged in spiritual activity. No, that's not the problem. The issues arise when we are not with other Christians. It arises when we are not doing spiritual things. It arises we forget who we are and we try to fit in with those who are not Christians. It is at those times, our language gets looser. We say things that we'd never say in the church house. Our modesty drops. Our attitudes sink. We do things that we wouldn't want others to know about. It is at those low moments, it may be on a date, it may be on a vacation, it may be at work, that our lights go out. It is at those low moments that we don't act very Christian. It is at those low moments that we shame and embarrass our Lord. It is at those low moments that we tarnish the glory of God's people.

Everyone who sees you will make three judgments. Now, these judgments may not be accurate, but they make them none the less. They will make a judgment about your faith. You are living as a Christian or you are a hypocrite. They will make a judgment about the church you attend. What they think about the church comes from what they think about you. It may be a positive conclusion, or "why would I want to go there?" Thirdly, they make a judgment about Christianity.

Your behavior, attitude, language and dress can help people form the right conclusions or they may be the very cause for negative conclusions. Some may visit because of the very way you conduct yourself. Others, may never come because of the way you conduct yourself.

There is never a time, never a place, never a situation when you turn off your spirituality. There is never a time when you do not think about Jesus. There is never a situation in which you do not let your light shine. There is never a time to act unchristian. A year of preaching and evangelism can be trashed by a single incident in which someone has acted ungodly. People will remember the wrong for a long, long time. The blemish and damage often takes years to recover. All the good that is done by a church can be upset by the unrighteous act of one member.

What you do reflects upon Jesus and His people. At the ballgame, at school, on vacation, at work, even in the neighborhood, what you say and do either glorifies Christ or it brings shame upon the Lord and His people. It is much bigger than just you. When you became a Christian, as Paul told the Corinthians, you are not your own. You have been bought with a price. You no longer have the right to do what you want to do. That thinking belongs to the people of the world who are lost. You belong to Christ. Just as in a marriage, when you said, "I do," that came with some things. That changed some things. So it is when you become a Christian. Sitting in a church house on Sunday, looking pretty and righteous, but living ungodly elsewhere, doesn't fool anyone except the person doing it.

Without spot or wrinkle. You help the church be that way by your choices.

Reflect Christ today-whether you are at home, at work, in the store, or on vacation. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me!

AMEN.

Roger Shouse

