



# 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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July 24, 2016

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**Proverbs 29:20** *“Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”*

Here in this Proverb we are warned about speaking too quickly. This is a person who is quick with an opinion. He is fast with a judgment. Like the gun fighter out of the old west, this is a person who draws first, fires quickly and when the smoke clears, he has shot the wrong person. Rash. Quick. Impulsive. What is missing in all of this is thinking things through. What is missing is the need to ponder. What is missing, as James reports, is being quick to hear and slow to speak. This guy is just the opposite. Shoot first with your mouth and hope for the best.

Parents can do this. They hear certain key words in a conversation from the kids and out comes the guns blazing. Without hearing the whole story, they assume the worst. With fingers pointing, and the volume of their voice increasing, they start laying down the law without knowing all that has happened. The result can back fire. They can accuse the innocent. They can restrict and punish those who didn't do anything. This came about because they were hasty in their words.

Brethren can do the same. They hear about something and immediately the tongues start firing off what ought to be done. Hasty words can lead to saying things that shouldn't be said. Hasty words can hurt. Hasty words often reveal prejudicial hearts and self righteous attitudes. Hasty words are often found in those who already have stones in their hands and are ready to throw them.

The opposite of haste, is slowness. When it comes to words, it means not saying immediately what comes to your mind. It means holding your tongue. It means not every subject needs my opinion expressed. It is easy to get on the mob mentality and use the social media to express thoughts that are written in anger and not thought out. It is easy to let emotion dictate reason. It is easy to speak things in haste. When emotions are at the wheel of our heart, there is no telling where we might end up. Anger makes us say ugly things to the people we love. Getting upset makes us say things that makes us look foolish. The haste of the moment leads us to quitting jobs, churches and even marriages. All of this is like a horse running without a bridle. The rider is at the mercy of the horse. There is no control.

As disciples of Jesus, we are to be in control. One of the virtues that Peter lists is "self-control." Paul preached "self-control" to the governor and it made him tremble. Out of control is dangerous. A car spinning out of control is dangerous. An airplane falling out of control is disastrous. And, a mouth that is out of control is

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harmful and hurtful. The mouth doesn't speak hastily on its own. Words do not just pop out. We can say, "I didn't mean to say that," but you did. You did, because you said it. It's interesting that it's usually negative words that we claim "pop" out. I shouldn't have said that, is never used of a compliment. I didn't mean to praise you, it just popped out. Stop all of that! Words don't pop out. We say words because we want to say them. The hasty words come from a mind that is out of control. It says whatever it wants to say. "I just call them as I see them," is another lame attempt to justify saying things that a person shouldn't say.

My friends in Texas have a wonderful cultural expression that only works in Texas. Anywhere else it blows up. But for some reason, in Texas, a person can say, "Bless your heart," and then they can say anything they want. And, what's even more amazing is that the person you say it to, will agree. It goes like this: "Bless you heart, you were just born ugly." Instead of getting mad, the guy will say, "I sure was." Or, "Bless your heart, you're just dumb, aren't you?" And the guy will agree. Try that in Indiana and you better run fast because the guy will chase you down the street for saying that.

Hasty words come from a mind that is out of control. Had someone been at the control panel, the words would have been thought out first. The words would have changed. The words may not have been said at all. But as it is, no self control, leads to hasty words and a life that is governed by emotions rather than reason, faith and righteousness. The out of control mind gets in trouble often. He is always saying things that upsets others. He is always being told to apologize. He is always stirring the pot. Controversy follows the hasty mouth. The hasty mouth won't wait for a trial and a verdict. It wants to get a mob and a rope and string up the person that they know is guilty. Why wait for the facts to come in. Why wait for those in charge to do something. The hasty person is ready to toss the guy out even before it's determined if he is guilty or not.

The hasty mouth isn't quick with praise and compliments. That wouldn't be such a bad thing. But rather, the hasty mouth is quick to condemn. It's pointing fingers fast. It's wanting someone to do something and do it right now.

What do I do if I have such a mouth? What if I'm first to come out with my opinions? What if I am always putting my foot in my mouth? What can a person do? First, apply the brakes. As James says, be quick to hear and slow to speak. You don't have to say anything. That's hard. That's a first for some of us. You mean, don't say anything? You mean don't express my opinion? Try it. Try not saying anything when a group of friends are talking about things.

Next, think before you speak. Listen to what you are about to say. Is it helpful or are you just jumping on the pile of everyone else who is speaking hastily? Will your words pull people back to the Lord or will they show that you have left your faith and reason at home?

Third, don't ever forget Jesus. Would Jesus want you to say what you are saying? No excuses. No, "Well, it's how I feel." Maybe you shouldn't feel that way.

Fourth, other people are influenced by you. Your words and tone can help people see Jesus or they can make people run the other way. Don't forget who you are.

Hasty words are not always vocal. They can be written on Twitter or Facebook. They can be sent as a text. Learn to apply the brake to your mouth. It will keep you out of a lot of trouble.

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