



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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Hebrews 2:14-15 *"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless Him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives."*

The world would have us to believe that Christians are cowards, defeated and a small band of misguided folks who lack intellectual powers. The world paints that picture because Christians are just the opposite. We are not small. We are not powerless. We are not ignorant. And, we are not defeated. Yesterday, we looked at one of the victories Christians have and that is over temptation.

Our passage today reveals another victory that belongs to Christ and His people, and that is over fear. Christ became like us so He could defeat Satan, and in so doing, free those who were held captive by the fear of death. Fear is powerful. There are so many fears, phobias, we call them. Fear of flying. Fear of stairs. Some fears seem imaginary. Others are real. These fears can cripple a person and limit what they do. Those who are afraid of flying, will get in a car and drive for days to get across the country. They could accomplish this in a few hours if they flew, but they are afraid. So, they don't.

It is amazing to notice how many times the disciples were afraid. Mark's gospel is a great place to see this. In Mark 4, as they are crossing the sea, a violent storm catches them. The boat is filling up with water. The waves are above the boat. The disciples wake Jesus up, fearing that they will perish. He stops the storm. The disciples are now even more afraid of the one who can control the weather. As soon as they reach shore, Mark 5 begins, a demon possessed man, who has been living in the tombs, naked, races towards them, screaming. Fear again.

- When the disciples caught the large quantity of fish, fear gripped them
- When the crippled man was lowered through the roof and Jesus healed him, the audience was afraid
- When Jesus was entering a village and they met a funeral procession heading out of town, Jesus touched the coffin and told the man to arise. He did. The crowd was overcome with fear.

(OVER)

People had never seen what Jesus was doing. There was nothing that could limit Him. It seems, for some of those who followed Christ, fear was becoming a regular part of their lives.

The greatest fears that people have are the fear of death, as our passage points out, and the fear of not pleasing God. They fear that "they won't make it." They fear being sent to Hell. They fear that God will not or cannot forgive them. They fear being lost. These fears drain any confidence that they have out of them. These fears make them see themselves as inferior to everyone else. These fears haunt them at night. It's because of these very fears, that their relationship with the Lord never reaches the potential that it could. They are afraid. They are afraid of going to Hell.

Some folks would say, doctrinally, a Christian cannot go to Hell. The N.T. warns otherwise. There are way too many passages that warn about the consequences of our behavior if we do not walk with the Lord. Expressions such as "stumbling," "fallen away," "shipwrecked their faith," "fall," "turned away," are used throughout the epistles to remind us and warn us that one can lose their salvation. It's not a done deal once we come to Christ. We must journey with Him. We must be immovable. We must grow. We must crucify the old man.

Christ gives us a victory over fear through His promises. He forgives us. He promises to forgive us. His promises are always true. He never breaks a promise. If He said it, then it will be. You and I can go to Heaven, not because we are perfect. That will never be where our hope is found. This is the basis of that very fear that so many have. They realize that they are not perfect. There are times that they could have been at worship, and they didn't feel like going. There are times when they promised someone not to tell and they did. There are times when we said the wrong word. There are times when we were at places that we shouldn't have been. The list is long. Perfection was shot a long time ago. Those memories of wrong causes us to doubt and causes fear to take over. We begin believing that "we are not good enough." And that's right. We are not. We see others as better than we are. Everyone seems so good, and we are not. Everyone knows what to do, but us. Everyone makes the right choices but me. That's not it, and even if it were, they are not saved, nor are we saved, because of our goodness or the gold stars on our page. It's the grace of God. That's it. That's where our hope lives. That's what drives out fear. That's what defeats those moments of doubts. The grace of God is given to those who believe. We are saved by grace through faith. That faith is action. That faith will lead us to obey Christ. Just as it lead Noah to build the ark, our faith will lead us to obeying Jesus.

Fear is driven out when I understand that God loves me and He wants me in Heaven. God doesn't have His radar gun pointing at me. God doesn't delight when I mess up. God isn't hoping that I fail spiritually. It's just the opposite. God is my biggest fan. God is doing everything He can to help me get to Him. You can please God. You can keep the faith. You can finish the course. You can make it to Heaven. How do you know that? God says so.

Jesus promised in John 14 that He was preparing a place for us, so that where He is, we may be also. He wants us to be where He is. Where is He? He is in Heaven. That's where God wants us.

Satan loves fear. Fear will cause you to throw in the towel. Fear will fill your heart with so many doubts. Drive out that fear. Fear not, is a common command throughout the Bible. There is a hymn, "We shall see the King someday." Do you believe that? Can you sing that? Is that possible? On your own, never. With the grace of God, absolutely.

Revelation 22 states that "we shall see His face." There was a time when seeing the face of God was something that people feared. To see the face of God meant death. No longer. Not now. Forever in Heaven with God. Seeing the face of God. Together with God.

You and I can have a victory over fear. Nope, I'm not good enough. I'm not smart enough. I'm not strong enough. I cannot not do it on my own. But with Jesus, we shall see the King someday.

Victory...live that way. Don't hold your head down like you're defeated. Stop singing the losers song. Stop living without hope. We shall see the King someday.

