



# 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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**2 Corinthians 4:16** *“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”*

Whispers of eternity—that's our thoughts this month. God is constantly reminding us of our spiritual side and of our existence beyond death. Our passage today presents one of the clearest images of those thoughts. Here Paul talks about the "outer man" and the "inner man." As this thought continues into the next chapter, the illustration switches to a house. Paul refers to the "outer man" as an earthly tent. It is in this series of illustrations that he shows the true feelings of a Christian concerning the eternal. Paul says,

- While we are in this tent, our bodies, we groan because we are burdened
- We long to be with God
- God made us for this purpose
- We prefer to be out of this body and to be with God

These thoughts show the emphasis and the superiority of the spiritual over the physical. We have a physical side to us, that's obvious, but it's the soul, the eternal side, which is more important. Our verse today helps us to see this.

The outer man, that's the body, is decaying. Just the opposite of the evolutionary theory, we do not progress to a greater state, but we gradually fall apart. Just look in the mirror. When you are in your 20's and 30's, you don't recognize this. But by the mid 40's on, you begin to see the miles on your life. You tire more easily than you once did. Moving things around hurts your back, when it never did before. You need glasses. Your hair begins to show the signs of age. Give it time, it only gets worse. Your memory starts fading. You walk with a cane. Medicines and doctor visits become a part of your regular routine. You are not getting better, you are decaying. The body is wearing out.

However, the condition of the body is not a reflection of the soul or the "inner man." Paul tells us that the two men are traveling opposite directions. One is decaying and the other is getting stronger day by day. What happens to the body is not an indication of what happens to the soul.

Also, interesting in this illustration, there is little we can do to stop the outer man from decaying. Certainly, we can eat better and exercise but that won't stop the aging process. We will still "decay." The outer man is out of our control. However, the inner man, which is far more important, is something that we can affect and change. The soul, that inner man, can be strengthened by the choices we make. We are in control of what happens to our soul. We can't do much to the outer man, but the inner man is within our power to improve.

(OVER)

So, as we age, what can we do to "renew" that inner man, or our soul? Daily choices, regular habits, controlling what influences you all have an impact on our soul. Some get older but they don't get any better. In fact, as some get older, they get worse. They become grumpy and complaining. They feel that their age gives them the right to rain on everyone's parade. Instead of being young and dumb, some have simply gotten old and dumb, especially spiritually. They have not fed their soul. They have not renewed the inner man. They have miles on their body and their soul has not learned anything. Stress, fear and worry continue to affect them. They do not see things spiritually. They have remained shallow and unchanged by the blessings and grace of God. They have stunted their soul by the poor choices in their life.

Paul's words to the Corinthians, state, "Therefore we do not lose heart..." We don't become discouraged. We are not down and out about this. Yes, we are falling apart physically, but our souls are better and stronger than ever before. That's how Paul saw things. This happens by making the effort and the choice to take care of that soul.

Worshipping God on a daily basis is part of this.

Praying all the time will remind you of this.

Putting your nose into the Bible and becoming transformed by what you learn will get you there.

Giving more diligence to the internal than the external will help you renew that inner man.

It's a matter of choice. You can be old and falling apart on the outside, but strong and powerful on the inside. Your mind, your soul, your determination and will can be so locked onto God that you have got your sights set on that Heavenly home. Nothing will move you from that destination. As you age, you more and more think about that Heavenly home. You want to be in Heaven. You don't let the physical side of things sway your purpose. Elections, weather, disappointments, hurts and pains, they don't "weaken" the inner man. Your sights are set on Heaven.

I watched the Cubs win the World Series last night. No one is alive today that remembers the last time they won. It was 108 years ago. The smiles, the jumping up and down, the hugs, the happiness of what they achieved not just in that final game, but in the series, the playoffs, and the entire season-it was a long journey but they made it. I just wonder if that's a glimpse of the joys we will feel when we make it to Heaven. Smiles. Hugs. Jumping up and down. For the Cubs, the injuries didn't matter at that point. The errors made throughout the season didn't matter at that point. They made it and they made it because of choices and the help of each other. What pains, sacrifices, hardships we have endured, won't matter once we are there. It's similar to flying. I have a flight coming up this weekend. Some are smooth. Some are bumpy. I've had flights delayed and flights canceled. I have been rerouted to different places because of weather or possible mechanical trouble. I've had bags damaged and some bags went on when I got off. A lot of adventures and stories. But once I'm on the ground, where I am supposed to be, it doesn't matter. It just doesn't matter. I made it. I saw a young guy who had his face in the throw up bag the entire flight. No one sat by him. We landed. He got off. He was ok.

Your journey may be difficult. You may not get much support at home. Maybe the congregation you are a part of isn't doing well right now. Maybe life has not turned out the way you expected. Maybe there has been a death. Maybe a divorce. Maybe some heartache. You can hang your hat on those things and use them to be miserable the rest of your life, or you can move on and continue to make the right choices and renew that soul of yours. The words of our passage today state that the inner man was being renewed day by day. Every day. Every day getting stronger. Every day hanging in there with the Lord.

These are all choices we must make. You decide whether your inner man is going to be renewed or old, stale and stuck. You decide whether you will get stronger each day spiritually or if you will ignore your spiritual side. Your choice. You can't stop what is going to happen to the outside of you. But the inside is all up to you. Make it the way that pleases God.

Day by day-it's a process. There is not one sermon, one verse, one thing that you need to do. It's steps. Each step takes you closer to the Lord. Day by day...

Today is one of those "day by days."

Roger Shouse