



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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‘2 Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.’

Confidence in the Lord is not only necessary in our walk with God but it is a determining factor into how well or successful we will be spiritually. Paul was so confident that he was willing to suffer and endure ill treatment as a Christian. These things did not shake him. He knew. He knew the Lord was right.

When we do not have confidence in what we believe, doubt blocks our hope. We become unsure. Eve wasn't confident. With just a few words, Satan had her dizzy and not sure what she believed. The next thing we know, she's reaching up for the forbidden fruit. Satan continues to do the same thing with us. When we are not confident, when doubts have clouded our thinking, we, too, reach out for forbidden fruit. Our fruit may not be on a tree. It might be in a bottle of alcohol. It might be in the arms of someone we are not married to. It might be in forms of stealing from our company. Unsure. Dizzy in our faith. Clouded thinking. Doubts about what God really says or means. Forbidden fruit not only seems appealing, it seems to be the right choice.

I know whom I have believed. That's the answer. Confidence in the Scriptures. I have heard folks debate for a long time the question about, "what if all that we are doing turns out to not be true?" What if man wrote the Bible? What if Jesus never rose from the grave? What if all of this isn't so? And the usual reply folks make is, "Well, if it's not true, I still have lived a good life." They say that and then counter, "but what if it is true?" This seems to satisfy most Christians. It doesn't me. Paul told the Corinthians that if Christ was not raised from the dead, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, those who have died, are finished and done and we ought to be pitied. We believed something that wasn't true. We have lived a lie, if none of this is true. We have encouraged others to believe this lie, if none of this is true.

Confidence in the Lord leads you to another line of reasoning. It leads you to believe that it is impossible for this not to be true. It is impossible for the Bible not to be from God. Too many proofs for it to be any other way. Prophecy. Unity of writers. Accuracy with history, sciences and the times. Man couldn't have written this story. Impossible. There is no other option.

From that, what the Bible says is true and accurate. We will be raised some day. How do you know that? The Bible says so. We will stand before God some day? How can you be so sure? The Bible says so. The earth will be destroyed some day? Are you sure? Absolutely.

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There will be Christians alive on earth when Jesus comes. Are you sure? Positively. Hell is real. Heaven is real. You can't have one without the other. How can you say that? The Bible shows us that. Unless one believes in Christ, he will not be saved. Are you sure about that? Yes. Absolutely. How? The Bible. It is impossible for the Bible not to be from God. What the Bible says is right. 100%.

Confidence. This is what our college students need as they walk through the classrooms of universities. College professors will challenge them. They are confident that the Bible is man-made. They will mock believers. They will push the limits of testing the faith of Christians. They have no room to even consider creation. Most science based and philosophy based studies today rip apart any faith in an eternal God. Young believers, especially those who are not confident, graduate with a degree four years later and a faith that has been tossed to the side of the road. Giving up on God and the Bible, opens them to a lifestyle of sin, selfishness and materialism. Greed becomes the new god. Fun becomes worshipped. Doing whatever I feel like is the new gospel. What happened? A faith was crushed by a serpent that created doubts, got them dizzy and put question marks where God placed exclamation points.

I know whom I have believed. Be thou faithful even to death is what the church at Smyrna was told. That expression means much more than staying with it until you are old and die some day. It carries the idea that you stay with it, even if you are put to death. A sword to your throat, now do you believe? Do you want to change your mind? Confident still? The words of Heaven are, "Be faithful even to death." Be faithful even if it costs you your life. Never cave in. Never waver. Never add question marks. Never doubt. There are things worse than death, and one of them is dying without faith.

I know whom I have believed. For us, at least for now, the sword isn't pointed to our throats. But the sword comes in different forms. It may be the laughter of those around you because you won't tell a lie, take a drink, snort some drug or say a bad word. It may come from those who ridicule you for going to church services as much as you do. They might even say, "Are you that bad?" The sword may look like lust. The sword may look like pride. The sword may look like worry. It may be our own family who holds the sword up to us. It may be co-workers. It may be friends. Be faithful unto death. I know whom I have believed.

I fear that sometimes in our teaching, we have pushed baptism so much that we have not truly understood nor established faith as it ought to be. If a person truly believes, then they will do whatever God says, including being baptized. An auditorium full of baptized folks who are not sure what they believe or who lack real confidence in the Lord is nothing more than a weak church. Evangelism won't happen, because the people are not sure of it themselves. When trials come, people run like Chicken-little, screaming the sky is falling. Fear and worry dominate weak faith. Discouragement comes easily to those with weak faith.

What's the answer? Spiritual confidence. Strong faith. I know whom I have believed. That type of faith leads to Paul later saying, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." I have. I have because I know whom I believe. I have because I am confident that this is right. There is no way that is cannot be right.

How do you get that confidence? Put your nose in the Bible. Spend time thinking, seeing and believing. Just because someone is loud, has all kinds of degrees listed after his name, has written books, doesn't mean he really knows what he is talking about. Don't cave in. Don't be afraid. Why do you believe? Stand upon those facts. Be confident. Your confidence in the Lord will color your decisions. It will show by the choices in your life.

I know whom I believe...do you?

Roger Shouse