



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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Jump Start # 1840

1 Timothy 4:16 "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; preserve in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

Our verse today comes from Paul's powerful reminder to young Timothy concerning his role as a preacher. Earlier in this section he tells the Timothy to be an example to the believers (12). He tells him to give attention to the public reading of Scripture (13). He is told to not neglect the gifts given to him (14). He is to grow in such a way that his progress is evident to all (15). Then comes our verse, "pay attention to yourself and to your teaching..."

There are several wonderful things we find here.

First, Pay attention to yourself. Paul tells us why at the end of this very verse. By paying attention to yourself and your teaching you will insure salvation for yourself. This tells us that we must take ownership of our souls. It's not the church's job to save me. God can only do His part. At the end of the day, it's up to each of us.

And what a great way to express this in the words, "Pay attention." Parents have said that to their kids as they have tried to have a serious talk with them. School teachers have had to say this to their class. Sometimes, even in a marriage, the wife is trying to talk to her husband and his attention is glued to the game on TV. Pay attention. Those words are necessary when one is driving. The opposite of paying attention, is being distracted. It's the distracted driver who weaves into the next lane and causes an accident. Life can distract us. We can get so busy with the here and the now that we forget about tomorrow and especially the eternal side of things.

Trouble so often begins very small, and it becomes a major problem because we do not pay attention. I am a yard fanatic. My yard is weed free, deep green, and better than many golf courses. Some in the neighborhood aren't looking so hot. One started the spring with a few dandelions. Nothing was done. Now, he has more dandelions than he has grass. What happened? He didn't pay attention to it. The same can be said about our finances. Not sticking to a budget, impulsive spending and the next thing you know there are more bills due than there is money coming in. What happened? Didn't pay attention. The same can happen to the upkeep of our cars and our homes. A little mold, a little rot and a whole bunch of not paying attention can result in a major problem down the road. The same happens to our health. Not going to the doctor or the dentist on a regular basis and not paying attention to these things can result in serious health issues later on.

(OVER)

Paying attention. Noticing things. The direction here is toward self. Too often, we see what others are doing, but we fail to see what we are doing. Pay attention to yourself. Are you engaged in worship? Are you growing? Are you active in the kingdom? Are you excelling as God wants? It's easy to float along, week after week. It's easy to not think much about "ourselves" spiritually. Are you praying? Really praying? Are you thinking spiritually? Are you making decisions that are based upon spiritual conclusions?

A person generally doesn't just drop out and give up like a blow out on your tire. Most times it's a slow leak that isn't noticed. Our souls slow down. We take our foot off the spiritual accelerator. We do less. We aren't around God's people much. We get too wrapped up in things that do not matter. Our attitudes slip. Our tongue slips. Our attendance slips. Instead of getting better, we become weaker. What happened? We weren't paying attention. And all the while we are so busy making a living, getting through the day, we never noticed that Satan slipped right in. We weren't paying attention. We start having thoughts that we wouldn't have had just a year ago. We begin to lean upon excuses more and more and find ourselves complaining more and more, especially about things down at the church. Sermons are long. Classes are boring. People are stuffy. Yet, we never realize, we didn't feel this way a while back. What's happened? We aren't paying attention to ourselves and we've allowed Satan to distract us, discourage us and defeat us.

What can a person do? Pay attention to yourself. Put yourself in the Scriptures. Realize through the Word of God that the Lord is talking to you. Put yourself in the seat of application as the preacher preaches. Imagine it's just you and him in that auditorium. Learn. Change. Grow. Become. Look for ways that you can raise the bar on what you are doing. Have you had any families over to your home in a while? Don't turn to the excuses. Our place is a mess. It's small. We need to paint. Pay attention. Being with others is good and your need that. How long has it been since you helped teach a Bible class? Me? Teach? I can't do that. Maybe you can. Maybe you can learn how. Pay attention. When was the last time you men gave a mid-week invitation or preached? Me? Yes, you. Pay attention to yourself. Why not?

When was the last time you took the bulletin or the church directory and just started praying for other families? Deep prayers. When was the last time you and the family got into the car on a Monday night and headed out to another congregation to hear a series of lessons being presented? Not on a Monday? We're tired. The kids have school the next day. Pay attention-remember?

We slip and slide off course because we don't pay attention. We see this every winter where I live. On a cold winter day, the roads might be icy or snow covered, and some ya-hoo flies down the road in his monster truck driving way too fast. He's not paying attention. He'll be in a ditch before the day is over. Pay attention.

Great words-important to the preacher Timothy and needful for us.

Roger Shouse