



# 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***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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## Jump Start # 1888

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***Proverbs 16:32 "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city."***

This simple Proverb illustrates a person of character. Here is a person who doesn't react to the things about him. He is under control. He has learned the secret of ruling his spirit. He doesn't fly off the handle and say things that he later regrets. He doesn't lose his cool and embarrasses himself in public. He has filters on his tongue. He knows when to say something and when not to say something.

The comparison is amazing. The one who rules his spirit is better than the mighty and greater than the warrior who captured a city. All around us we see examples, almost daily, of those who are spinning out of control. There are many ways this is shown:

There are those who habits and addictions have taken over them. Drugs and alcohol dominate their lives. We were at a fourth of July concert and fireworks show and all around us was folks drinking. People drink alcohol at ballgames. They do it at weddings. They do it at concerts. They do it at restaurants. About the only place I haven't seen drinking, is at funerals. One day, it will be there. Can't folks enjoy good music without booze? Can't they have fun at a picnic without beer? Can they rule their spirit?

Out of control spending is also the sign of our times. Dave Ramsey has become a multimillion because people who have gotten themselves in such messes do not know what to do. They need help. His advice, simple and practical, is about bringing those wild spending impulses under control and living within a budget.

But our passage seems to address not alcohol or spending, but anger, attitude and our tongue. This too is out of control today. Just watch a TV talk show about politics. The shouting matches begin. Get a group of protesters together, and quickly, things can turn ugly and out of control.

All about us we see the results of spirits that are not being ruled. Parents having shouting matches with their kids at the store. Husband and wives who end the day being angry with each other. People who spill their out of control spirits onto Facebook and Twitter. Angry. Out of control. Unhappy. Upset. It sure is easy to see all of that these days.

So, how does one rule his spirit? How do we pull back on the reigns when we are upset? How do we keep from saying something that we shouldn't? How do we stop before we let our thoughts and tongues get ahead of us?

**(OVER)**

First, these things are not easy. What often happens is an incident flairs up that catches us off guard. Without thinking, we move into action. We say something that is offensive, mean and hurtful. Instead of helping things, we only make things worse. All of this started with the two words, "without thinking." That's the key. Just like driving, if you take your hands off the wheel, something bad will probably happen. I've known people who drive with their knees. Scary, if you ask me. I was passed once by a young woman. She was flying down the highway. Hamburger in one hand and cell phone in the other. When I saw that, I slowed down. That was a wreck ready to happen. So, we don't take our minds off our spirit. We think before we act and we speak. As James says, 'be quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to anger.' Think things out. Don't just charge into battle. Those that did that, usually became casualties of the battle. Come up with a plan. Gather the facts. Think about the best way to say things. Cool down.

Second, say a quick prayer. That always helps. Prayer always fits. Bring God into the situation. By praying, you may remember that Jesus uttered no threats. When reviled, He did not revile in return. He was under control. Quickly think what Jesus would do. There was occasions when Jesus turned tables over and drove people out of the temple. They were abusing and misusing the house of God. Yet, even then, even when angry, Jesus never crossed the line. He never had to go back and apologize. He never lost control of His spirit. He ruled His spirit on the cross, when accused, when challenged, when tempted and when He saw wrong. Jesus was in control.

Third, you are not responsible for the behavior of others. Some battles are not yours. Saying little comments under your breath, but just loud enough for others to hear, picks a fight. Is that the fight you ought to be in? Is that your battle? Some are. Especially if it involves your family, your congregation or your God. But many things I may not agree with, go along with or even like, but they are not my battles. In all of this, I must remember to let my light shine. Coming across like a jerk certainly isn't going to win anyone to Christ. Being helpful, showing alternative choices, making others think is much harder than giving an off the cuff comment that insults them. Not every battle is ours.

At the end of the day, not only must I be concerned about how I influenced others by ruling my spirit, I have to see what impact it has had on my soul. If I continually walk through the mud, I will be muddy. Getting upset. Being angry all the time. Complaining about society. Finding nothing good to be thankful for. All of these things will ruin your spirit. It will turn you into a sour person. Rule your spirit by refusing to let the world change you. Rule your spirit by continuing to walk with the Lord. Rule your spirit by your choices.

You'll notice, the passage does not say, "God rules your spirit." This is something that we do. Our choices. Hang around angry people, and you'll pick up their ways. Hang around negative people, and you'll be complaining just like they are. Hang around God's people who have the right spirit, and suddenly the sun shines on the inside of your soul. You see things differently. We are more upbeat, thankful and hopeful. Fill your life with Christ. Let the word of God dwell within you.

Rule your spirit-it's up to you to do that. Satan will do everything to make you lose control, but you can keep that from happening.

Greater than the one who captures a city, is the one who can rule his spirit.

Roger Shouse

P.S.- We are currently studying the Christian and his influence on Wed. nights at 7:30. Won't you come and study with us and learn to be that light shining in a dark world. Who can we influence for good. Come and join us and bring someone with you. Joe