



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 # 1936

Revelation 12:17 "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold t the testimony of Jesus."

We are at war. It's not North Korea and the nukes. It's not one political party against another on policy. It's not college football game day. All of these may seem like wars, but the real war, that has been going on for a long time, is between Satan, the dragon, and the people of God. This is what this passage is showing us. This wartime language is sprinkled throughout the N.T.

- Timothy was told to fight the good fight of faith (**1 Tim. 6:12**)
- The Corinthians were told, we are not ignorant of Satan's schemes (**2 Cor. 2:11**)
- The Ephesians were told to put on the full armor of God so they could extinguish every flaming arrow of Satan. (**Eph. 6:11**)

War movies are exciting to watch, but real war is tough. Good men often die in wars. Hearts are broken and lives are changed. The spiritual war that Satan is engaged in with us has many sides to it. Sometimes it's not so obvious. He can be very subtle in what he does. He chips away at our faith. He gets us bogged down in trivial things that do not matter. He gets us sidetracked. Apathy, discouragement and worldliness are huge tools that he uses to pull us away from Christ. He'll attack the congregation that we worship with. Internal fighting. Dullness. Passionless worship. Gossip. He'll stir and stir things up until there is a real mess in the church. Folks leave. That's what he wants. Folks will get mad at each other. That's what he wants. We lose our focus and we stop doing what we are supposed to do. Satan wins.

But he's not done with us. He'll attack our home. He'll smack our marriages. Jealousy, lust, indifference can pull a couple apart. Money troubles develop and we fight and fuss with each other. Satan will use Facebook to bring up people from our past that may confuse us and make us wonder if we married the right person. He'll open the door to lustful thoughts through the internet. He makes porn available and easy to find and easy to hide. He'll mess with our kids. Wrong friends. Drugs. Self esteem issues. A family that is pulling apart is a family that Satan loves. He wants divorce. He wants words flying through the air that are not kind, thought out or loving. He loves doors that slam shut, ending conversations. He encourages flirting at the office. Attack the family, and it is likely that they will stop worshipping together. Prayers will stop. Hearts will close the door to Jesus and a battle has been won by Satan.

(OVER)

And, in all of this, Satan will attack you. He'll use doubt to confuse you. He'll use situations to scare you and make you worry. He'll introduce you to twisted religions that seem right, but they are not. He'll get you to stand in line with the world and have the world influence you. It's little at first. Social drinking-what's so bad about an occasional glass of wine. We are hearing more and more Christians asking that. That's just a foot in the door for Satan. It's a glass. What can be wrong with one glass. Satan is very patient. He can wait. He can wait months and even years. One glass, easily becomes two glasses and on some special occasions, a whole bottle. Without even knowing it, we have taken yet another step away from Christ. Then it's movies that we shouldn't see. There's just a little bad language, we tell ourselves. It's not much. It's no different than what we hear at school and work every day. Satan is patient. Then, it's the blockbuster movie that everyone is talking about. It's laced with profanity, but it's up for the awards. We have to see it. Satan smiles. Then one day, out of the blue, a car pulls out in front of us, and we slam on our brakes. Without thinking, a bad word comes out of our mouth. We'd never say that word, but we did then. Satan smiles. We get so busy at work and there is so much to do at home, that our Bibles sit on the back seat of our cars, untouched until the next church service. Satan smiles. We stay up until we are exhausted, and as soon as we lay down we are asleep. Another day without a prayer. Satan smiles. We don't see it, but he does. Day by day, we are getting weaker spiritually. Day by day, more of the world is filling our hearts. Satan is patient, the day will come, when we go to worship out of habit and not love for the Lord. The day may come when we think of everything in world to do, except feed our souls. We pull away from our church family. We become more selfish. It's hard for us to see all of this, but Satan does. This has all been a part of his plans. This was designed by him. This was a war and we did not even recognize the enemy.

And, when it's all over, our souls lie empty, shallow and faithless. Tears stream down the face of God as Satan dances with delight. Another battle won. Another soul lost.

What can I do? You can win the war with Christ. Greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world, is what John wrote. **(1 John 4:4)**

First, get passionate about worshipping God. Pour your heart into what you are doing. Never settle for substandard worship. Always give your best. Always focus upon God. You may not be able to change the preacher, song leader or those that lead worship, but right there from where you are, you can make it meaningful for you.

Second, save that family. Get close to your mate. Put up the phone and tablets and talk to each other. Establish boundaries that will protect your marriage. Be transparent. Let your mate see what you are reading, sending and texting. Let them know your passwords. No secrets. Get God back into your home. Real prayers. Real conversations that are laced with spiritual insights and truths. Real answers to today's questions.

Third, put on that armor of God and fight for your soul. Don't let Satan have it. Pray. Open the Bible up and do some real reading and thinking. Go do something for someone else. Establish some out of bounds on movies, music and even friends. A little poison in some brownies, even though those brownies look great to taste is deadly. The same goes for poison in movies, music and friends. In your house, you set the rules. So, set them. Keep Satan out.

There is a war going on. If you sleep through life, chances are you'll be a casualty. If you think we are over reacting and things are not so bad, you'll be shot down. If you think things will just work out for the best, you'll be in Satan's POW camp before you know it. The language and warnings from Heaven are that we are at war. Time to put on the helmet, grab the shield, take up the sword and defend our hearts and faith.

Through Christ, we can be more than conquerors. **(Rom. 8:37)** Through Christ, our congregations can thrive, our families can be awesome and our live can please the Lord. It won't just happen. We must work, fight and hold our ground against Satan.

The victory belongs to the Lord. Are you winning these battles with the Lord's help, or is Satan taking over?

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)