



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 # 1957

1 Corinthians 15:51 "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will be changed."

Our verse today comes from the resurrection chapter of the Bible. Paul gives proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He details the consequences if Christ had not be raised. He draws a connection to our resurrection. Layers of lessons for us.

Paul reveals a mystery in our verse. Two things.

First, we will not all die. That's what he means by sleep. Jesus said, "our friend Lazarus is asleep." Lazarus was in the grave. Jairus' little daughter was "asleep." Jesus raised her from the dead. Sleep is used to describe the death of God's righteous people.

Remembering that Corinthians is written to a church, Paul is telling brethren that not all Christians will die. Persecution will not kill all Christians. Wars and disasters will not wipe all Christians off the face of the earth. We will not all sleep. There will be Christians alive when Jesus comes.

Secondly, we will be changed. The change takes place in the following verses as Paul describes the resurrection when Jesus comes. We don't all have to die first and then be raised. Some will be alive when Jesus comes and they will be changed. In an instant. In the twinkling of an eye, he later says.

That is the thought I want us to think about today, not just the coming of Jesus, but the possibility that we could be alive when that happens. I feel that we have pushed that possibility so far in the background that we don't really think it will happen. We feel that we'll get old and die. That has been the course for most people. Why should it be any different for us? Why? This verse is why. We shall not all sleep. We might be the ones who are alive when the Lord comes.

Other places in the N.T. describe the coming of Jesus with a blast of the trumpet and the voice of the archangel. The skies would be filled with all the angels that are coming with Jesus. Immediately, the living is changed. Graves open and the dead are raised. Jesus said all who are in the tombs will come forth. The rapture concept of only certain ones going up to meet the Lord while everyone else remains on earth simply isn't supported in Scriptures. The earth and creation will be destroyed at that time. Cosmic forces never seen before would change things as we know them.

(OVER)

I'd like to think all of this would happen on a Sunday, His day, the best day of the week, but I have no way of knowing. I can only imagine looking up in the sky and seeing hundreds and hundreds of angels, everywhere.

At that moment everything stops. Traffic would stop. People would race out of their houses to look skyward. News casts would be broadcasting this live. Reporters from around the world would all be seeing the same thing. There are no words that would describe this. And, there surrounded by all those angels in the sky, is Jesus, our Lord. Some how we will know it's Him. Nonbelievers may at first think that we are being invaded by aliens. Some will wonder what is this and who is that? But you and I will know. We've been ready for this day. We have read this Corinthian chapter over and over. And now, here it is. And, just like that, before we can take it all in and before we even have time to grasp everything that is going on, we are changed. We become immortal and imperishable. Forget the walkers, the canes, the hearing aids-you suddenly do not need them. You are in a different state. It's glorious. It's wonderful. And, just like that we are ushered into eternity.

Parts of this sound scary. We've never seen anything like this. It's hard to imagine our world not being our world. We go to work until we retire. We gather weekly down at the church house. We put fuel in our cars and food in our bellies. That's our world. That's all that we know. It's been that way for a long, long time. To think that all of this changes in an instant and our world as we know it ending, is scary.

Some people will not get to see things that they had planned for. There are weddings that were to take place that won't. There are babies that will not be born. There are surgeries that do not take place. There are packages that won't be delivered. Everything stops. Think about this coming week, and if the Lord came today, what wouldn't happen in your life. I wouldn't see if the Dodgers made it to the World Series, because there would be no World Series if Jesus came. The discussions about tax reform and border walls being built would never be solved. Some have doctor appointments. Some would be on the road traveling. Some are off in college. If Jesus came today, all of that stops.

Some people would not be ready. Many would not be ready. They have lived their lives doing what they want, ignoring God and finding happiness as the most important thing to pursue. The skies fill with angels and for the first time, some might pray. Some don't know what to pray, how to pray, nor who to pray to. Some have lived their entire adult life mocking God and living with the assumption that God doesn't exist. Some have been very vocal and even sought to discredit the Bible. Now, the Lord appears in the sky. Now, they know. Now, they know what a fool they have been. Begging for mercy, cries of 'save me,' fill the air, fear and panic race through their hearts. Will the unrighteous also be changed immortal and imperishable? I suppose. The Corinthian passage is written to believers. But Hell is real. Hell is linked with Heaven. If there is a Heaven, then there is a Hell. No Hell, no Heaven. They are found together in the last sentence in Matthew 25. So, the unrighteous will be cast into eternity as well.

For us, it's a different picture. There was a photo taken years ago, of a serviceman getting off of an airplane. His arms are stretched out as his children run towards him with big smiles on their faces. I'd like to think that's what it will be for us. We have loved Jesus all of our life. We have followed Him, obeyed Him, quoted Him, imitated Him and talked to Him. We have remembered His death weekly. We have sung hymns to Him. We have told our family and friends about Him. We are who we are because of Him. Our hearts have changed because of Him. And now, there He is in the sky. We have waited and waited for this for a long time. For the righteous, tears will stream down our cheeks as we reach out to embrace our Lord and our Savior. It's Jesus!

We will not all sleep. It's not up to us, but if it were, would you like to be one who is alive when Jesus comes? Would you like to witness His coming? You might. Don't push this so far back in your mind that you'll be shocked if it happens. It just may.

We sing, "There's a great day coming, a great day coming..."

Someday, it will come.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)