



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 # 1979

Psalms 62:5 "My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him."

This week we have been taking a look at several blessings of God. These blessings help us. They keep us where we need to be. They encourage us and strengthen us. Like walking through a garden, these are beautiful blessings that nourishes our soul. We need these things. We've taken our thoughts this week from Eve's conversation with Satan about the forbidden fruit. There was one tree, in the middle of the garden, that God did not want them to eat from. The consequences were severe, death. However, the serpent got Eve thinking about that forbidden fruit. Her attention was drawn to that. Nothing else was said about the rest of the garden. She forgot about all the ways God had blessed her. She had available to her all the fruit of the garden, except one. And it was that one fruit that she wanted.

Eve's temptation is not unlike ours. Satan gets us to thinking about what is forbidden. He covers our eyes to all the other blessings we have. We become obsessed with that forbidden fruit. It is all that he wants to talk about. It becomes all that we can think about. One fruit-forbidden. We feel cheated, neglected and left out until we get that one forbidden fruit. If we could only count the trees in our garden. If we could only see the other blessings before us. This is what our series has been about this week.

Blessings such as fellowship with other Christians. Blessings such as the love of God. Blessings such as truth. And, now we end this series with the blessings of hope. Our passage ends today with, "for my hope is from Him." In God there is a hope.

Hope is what keeps people going. In sports, a team that feels that there is no hope of their winning, falls apart. In life, when all hope is lost, people give up. We give up the search, when all hope is lost. We turn to divorce when we feel all hope in saving a marriage is lost. We file bankruptcy when we feel all hope is gone.

One of the greatest blessings found in God is hope. It's not a mere wish. It's not a Christmas list. It's not crossed fingers and four-leaf clovers. It's founded upon the promises of God. It's sure. It will be. Our hope lies in Jesus Christ.

(OVER)

Three real hopes found in Christ.

First, that I can do this. I can please God. I can be the righteous person that God wants me to be. I can be holy. I can seek first the kingdom. I can, because He said so. Will this take some learning on my part? Sure. Will it be easy? No. Will it take some time? Yes. Character takes time to develop. It takes time to learn about Jesus. But gone are the days that I hear Satan whispering, you'll never please God. Gone are the thoughts, you are never going to be good enough. Gone are the feelings of failure. Well done, is what the happy master proclaimed to the five talent man. He did it. He did exactly what the master wanted and so can you and so can I. Lift yourself up. Get out of the gutter of life. Leave worthless friends behind. You are a child of God.

Second, that I can be forgiven. Jesus promised this. The wrongs that were so wrong, can be forgiven by God. The pain that I caused, the trouble that I made, the poor choices that I followed, can all be forgiven by God. Will there remain some consequences? Probably. Will there be some memories and scars? Most likely. But I can stand righteous before my God. I can stand forgiven. There is hope in that.

Thirdly, that I can spend eternity, forever with God in Heaven. That's more than a wish or a dream, it is something that can happen. It is a hope, a real hope. I can overcome whatever bad things that have come my way. I am not stuck nor predetermined to a certain course in life. Forever with God. Forever with no other place to go. Forever where I need to be. Forever where God created me to be.

What a great blessing hope is. God believes in you. God knows you. And God, certainly wants you to win spiritually. What is missing in many lives today is hope. Too many do not believe that they can please God. Too many do not believe that God will ever forgive them. And, too many do not think that they will be in Heaven. Why? Faith. They lack faith in God. They lack faith in the promises of God. They lack faith in the word of God.

Hope and faith go together. Without one, there won't be the other. Hand in hand, hope and faith allows us to face another day. Hope and faith pushes us through troublesome times. Hope and faith puts an anchor deep into the soil of Heaven.

Count those trees in your garden. There are others, many more. We are so blessed by God. Get your eyes off the forbidden tree. Focus on what God has given you. Be thankful. We are treated better than we deserve.

Remind each other of God's eternal blessings.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)

