



# 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*

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***1 Peter 4:4 "In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you"***

Surprises-life is full of them. Some are great, like birthday surprises or an unexpected visit from a dear friend. Great times. Other surprises are shocking, such as, the wife who discovers that her husband has been unfaithful to her. Or, the worker who loses his job. Or, a letter from the IRS stating that you owe back taxes. Shock. Surprised. Upsetting.

Peter identifies two surprises in this setting. It illustrates the growing difference between the child of God and the people of the world. They are moving in different directions and they are after different things. This difference is found by the words in our verse, "they" and "you." They, are the world. You, are the Christian. They are surprised at you. They thought differently. They thought you'd join them. They thought you were counted with them.

The first surprise Peter notices is from the world. They are surprised that the Christian doesn't run with them. The ESV translates this, "they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you." They are surprised.

Why are they surprised? Did they not know that you are a Christian? Did they not notice a change in you? Did they think that there would be no problem? Did they think you could be a Christian and continue in the debauchery that ruined your soul? Did they think what you did outside of worship doesn't matter? Did they think that they were ok with God?

Surprised. Shocked. All of this now turns to evil and wicked accusations. Peter ends the verse by saying, "they malign you." They ridicule you. If you are not with them, then they are against you. The friendship ended when you would not join them in their sinful fun.

This shock continues today. When a person becomes a Christian, he takes a step out of the world and becomes a follower of Christ. Things change. He is not only adopted by God into Heaven's family, but he now moves his citizenship from the world to Heaven. He sees himself as no longer fitting in with the world. God's commands to "love not the world" and warnings about "friendship with the world" ring true for the Christian. He is now a stranger and an alien. As the hymn goes, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' thru."

**(OVER)**

Sadly, for many in the religious community, they have not made that break with the world. They do not see what happens on Sunday impacts what happens on Monday, Friday and Saturday. To be blunt, there are those who would proudly claim, "I can be a good Christian and still party with my friends." Such thinking lacks insight, logic and above all, Biblical proof. No, you can't be a good Christian and dance with the world. You are to be a light unto the world. You are to be transformed and not conformed to the world. If the world sees little difference in your dress, attitude, language, and behavior, other than sitting in a church building on Sunday morning, you've missed the point of Christianity.

Peter's point is that the world is shocked. They are surprised. They don't understand why you don't run with them. And, since you don't, they turn the tables on you and try to destroy you. They malign you. They accuse you. They mock you. They will have nothing to do with you. They are running fast toward Hell and since you won't keep up with them, they want nothing to do with you.

Second, there is yet another surprise in Peter's context. The next verse states, "but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." They will. The "they" is the same "they" as in verse four. It's the world. They are surprised that you don't run with them and then they will be surprised that they have to give an account to God. They are running away from God. They are embracing sin as much as they can. They do not believe in God and they certainly do not believe that they will give an account of their actions to Him. What is there to say about the flood of debauchery that they are racing towards? It breaks every command of God and it crushes the heart of God. He did not make us this way. It's more than sin, it's running away from God. It's living the prodigal's dream. The far country. Excitement. No rules. Do what you want. Drunk on sin and no conscience to bother them. They will give an account, is what Peter says. How shocked they will be. Had they truly believed this, they would have changed their behavior. When they stand before God, they will have no excuses and no options to change. It will be too late.

The Christian knows. The Christian understands that we will be judged. It's not perfection, but faith wrapped around the grace of God that gives the Christian confidence and hope. The Christian longs to be in the presence of God. He longs to leave this sick world that gives little thought to the soul of man.

Surprises-the world has no idea. The Christian does. We walk by faith.

Roger Shouse (used by permission)

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