



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 # 2059

Ephesians 4:1 "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

Our verse today reminds us that our relationship with the Lord is described as a walk. It's not a one final shot that determines whether or not we go on. Multiple times, not just in Ephesians, but throughout the N.T., we find this word "walk." Walk in love. Walk not as the Gentiles walk. Walk in the light. Here, it's walk in a manner worthy of the calling.

There are some things we can pull from that simple word "walk."

First, walk implies intention, determination and a will. Choices are made. Right choices, to be and to continue to be right with the Lord. A step isn't a walk. Young parents get excited about that first step their baby takes. After a surgery or an injury, that first step in rehab is important. But God is interested in more than just one step. It's a walk. It's a journey. It's a destination. Each step takes you somewhere. You are getting closer or farther from the Lord. Walk in a worthy manner.

Second, walk implies direction and continuation. When someone says, 'Let's go for a walk,' it implies that you are headed somewhere. It may be a lap around the neighborhood. It may be a walk in the mall or a park. Step after step makes a walk. Staying with it. Spiritually, as Paul said, there is a course to finish. There is a faith to be kept. Just going to one Sunday church service now and then doesn't really make a walk. Just reading a chapter one day because you feel guilty but that's it, doesn't constitute a walk. It's daily activities. It's daily praying. It's daily worshipping. It's daily making righteous choices. That's the walk.

Third, when you are walking, people see where you are headed. You are leaving an example and a pattern. A lifetime of goodness. A pattern of helping. A spirit of a servant. It's confusing when a person doesn't have that clear walk in their life. Which side are they on? Are they with the Lord? Some moments seem to say 'yes.' But then, there are other moments, where it seems the answer is "no." Others, especially our family, often follow the steps that we leave. Footprints, legacy, examples-that's how folks will remember us when we are gone.

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Fourth, since it is a walk that we are on, one mistake, one sin, doesn't mean we are a total failure. We slip. We do things without thinking them through. We make bad decisions when tempted. There are times when we have stopped walking with the Lord. Some sit down. Some quit and stay where they are. Some turn around and walk back to where they came from. But for most of us, we know enough and believe enough that we understand that we must keep going. We know what is right. One sin doesn't ruin us.

But on the same thought, one great victory doesn't complete the journey, either. Ours is a series of steps everyday. One just one big step. The first step on the moon was important. The first day in your new job is important. The first time behind a pulpit is valuable. But there are more than just those first things. So, you have taught a Bible class. Great. Good for you. Now, what? You are not done. Your journey isn't completed. So, you had a family over for dinner. That's a good thing. But now what? That's not the end. You haven't done all that you need to do. So, you mailed a card to someone. Great. But, now what?

One good deed doesn't make a walk. Likewise, one wrong step doesn't mean you are a failure.

Fifth, we do not walk alone. There are others all around us on this same journey. Some are walking ahead of us. They have been at this longer than we have and they know things that we don't. But, if you look behind you, you'll see that there are others following you. They are on the same journey. They are not where you are. This is an important point to remember in our unity and fellowship. It's easy to assume that we are all walking side by side. We are all at the same point and place. But we are not. Maturity, experience, knowledge, years of doing this, puts all of us at different places on this walk. Now, we can be jealous of those ahead of us. We can wish that we were where they are. Some of us grew up with godly parents and from an early age we understood and knew the faith we need in the Lord. Others came into this later in life. It was harder for them because they didn't grow up going to Bible classes like others did. We are at different places on this journey.

Here is what I have learned about this. I need to look and see who is ahead of me. I need to learn from them. I need to seek their advice. They can keep me from making mistakes. But when I look behind me, I need to be patient with those who are coming up. It will take them some time to learn and to know what I already know. Don't be short with them because they are not where you are. Help them. Share with them. Encourage them.

And, I need to always keep my eyes open to those who have stopped walking. There are some who have gotten tired and they just want to quit. There are those who are trying to carry too many burdens and it's weighing them down. Some are looking all the way back to where they came from and are thinking about turning around and going back. The far country calls them. We need to help those who are struggling in their walk. We need to remind some why we are on this walk.

Enoch walked with God. Noah walked with God. You and I walk with God. I love the story, even though I doubt it's true, about God and Enoch. The story is told that they were out walking together one evening. It was getting late. God said to Enoch, "It's closer to my home than yours, come home with me." God took Enoch. I hope that's what happens to me someday. God just says, "It's closer to My home than yours, just come home with Me."

Walking with the Lord. Not ahead of the Lord. Not away from the Lord. But with the Lord. Adam hid from the Lord. Jonah ran from the Lord. Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see the Lord. We are to walk. Walk in a manner worthy. Walk remembering who we are. Walk carrying the name of Jesus.

Walk in a manner worthy.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
