



# 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***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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***1 Corinthians 15:17 "and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."***

Our verse today comes from the resurrection chapter of the N.T. It's powerful. It's convincing. It's believable. It's layered with lessons for us. There were some in the Corinthian church who were claiming that there is no resurrection. It's hard for us to understand how they could be Christians and hold to that theory. The Sadducees had similar beliefs. They were materialists. Paul masterfully shows that such beliefs are not true. Scriptures affirm a resurrection. Eyewitnesses confirm a resurrection. Faith demands a resurrection. If Jesus was not raised, neither will we be. However, if Christ was raised, so shall we. The two are eternally linked together.

Now, from this, we find a much larger lesson for us.

1. What we believe matters. We live in times of tolerance. Everyone is allowed their own opinion. You may not agree with someone, but the spirit of our times demands that we cannot say that other opinions are wrong. They are simply different than ours. That's not where Paul stood. It wasn't ok for some of the Corinthians to deny the resurrection. It was wrong.

2. What we believe comes with consequences. Beliefs are logically connected and tied to other things. One statement does not stand alone. This is where we find our verse coming from today. To deny the resurrection means Jesus was not raised. If Jesus was not raised, then faith is worthless and we have no hope nor forgiveness. This is where most arguments fall to pieces. People do not want to accept the other things that come and are attached to what they claim. If man is nothing more than an evolved animal, then can we really help and expect better behavior than what is animalistic? Can a person be faithful to one person for life? Can a person be moral? Can a person not help killing others? Those are obvious attachments to life without God. There are consequences to what we believe.

3. Belief systems must be supported with evidence more than just our liking that idea. Some Corinthians claimed that resurrections were false. Any proof? Any evidence? Paul proved Christ resurrection. Scriptures. Eye witnesses. Faith. There was a mountain of evidence. Just saying something loudly doesn't make it true. To deny a resurrection, then all the things Paul had stated had to be dismantled. The Corinthians had to show that the Scriptures did not teach resurrections. They had to discount the eyewitness reports. All of them.

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Then they had to answer how forgiveness comes about with Christ's resurrection. Then they had to answer, why do people risk their lives in faith, if this is it. If there is no resurrection, what's the point? Paul proved his position. The Corinthians had no proof. Just saying something doesn't make it true.

4. There are some undeniable facts that Paul would not give up on. If Christ was not raised, as our verse takes a look at, we are still in our sins. Paul never denied the existence of God. He never considered the possibility that we do not have sins. There are some foundational truths that cannot be moved. There is a God. We have sinned against Him. Even if the Corinthians were denying the resurrection, those truths remained. What would they do with their sins if Christ did not die for them?

5. Fellowship demands that we be united on core components of Christianity. Being of one mind, as the Corinthians were told in the first chapter, necessitates a unity on who and what Jesus has done. This is not one of those things in which you can believe what you want and I can believe what I want and some how we still get along. How would the Corinthians worship with this division of thought? We sing, "Up from the grave He arose." Would some of the Corinthians not sing that song? We take the Lord's Supper every Sunday to remember the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. What would some of the Corinthians do? Excuse themselves and leave? Our funerals are preached with thoughts of a coming resurrection. What would these non-resurrection Corinthians do? Their denial of a resurrection was much more than a point of theology. It impacted worship. It colored everyday life. It would lead to a division. Unity cannot continue with these core disagreements.

6. Faith is only good if it is true. This, too, comes from our verse today. If Christ was not raised, then your faith is worthless. What good are worthless things? Worthless. No value. No purpose. No hope. "Well," some say, "at least they are going to church." What good is that if they believe something that is worthless. There are all kinds of wild ideas in religion. Folks hold on to them, as if they are true. Unproven. Not supported by Scriptures. Yet, preached loud and strong, many cling to these things as if they are true. A worthless faith will not save. A worthless faith is believing a lie. It's not built around hope, but a wish and a wish that won't come true.

Have you ever noticed the connection to these verses with the "evil companions corrupt good morals" found later in the chapter. We often have an image in our mind who those evil companions are. The loud mouth teenager who is a trouble maker comes to our mind. We pull that verse and use it for teen studies. Why, in a whole chapter dedicated to the resurrection, does Paul warn about "evil companions?" Could it be that the evil companions are those Christian adults who were denying the resurrection? Could Paul be warning the church to move away from them? They are false. They are without hope. What they are saying is without proof. They are dangerous. Denying the resurrection, kills our faith. That's the evil companions. Not some teenager down the street. But a fellow member of the church who is saying things that is not true.

Our words can build hope or they can destroy faith. Be careful what you say. Think about what you are saying. Better have something to prove what you say other than just you. Best make sure what you say makes sense and is consistent with the Scriptures. Then, realize, when you say things, there are consequences. You could get in trouble for what you say, if it's not true.

But then, we look at the opposite of our verse today. If Christ HAS been raised, then your faith is VALUABLE and you are NO LONGER in your sins. Which way is it? Where's the proof?

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

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