



# 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 Peter 5:6** *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time."*

We are back. Last week I was at St. Peter's Basilica. Yes, the real one, in Rome. The building is beautiful but what really amazed me was thinking about our verse today. Outside, there is a huge statue of Peter on one side and Paul on the other side. Inside, around the top, in letters that are nine feet tall, Peter's name is painted in gold. In a glass case, near the altar, are chains that are claimed to have been used on Peter. Then in the basement, or the crypt area, passing the graves of several popes, there is the grave of Peter. One cannot get very close and no photographs are allowed. This building is a shine to Peter.

And, here, in our verse today, Peter is telling those early Christians to be humble. This was a lesson that Peter had to learn himself. There were times when the apostles were arguing about which one was the greatest. There was that inner circle of Peter, James and John. There are many reasons to think that Peter would have been the Lord's favorite. However, the message from Jesus is that of service. The greatest is the one who serves.

The opposite of humility is pride. Too much of self gets us into trouble. We think we are better than others. We think some things do not apply to us. We think the world ought to pause and take notice of us when we pass on through. It is because of pride that cannot apologize. It is because of pride that some find excuses to justify their mistakes and failures. It is because of pride that some refuse to ask for help.

Peter's words are humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. You will not stand as an equal to God. You will not place God under your hand. You are not too good, too smart, or too grown up to need God. Stop talking so much and listen to what God has to say. Stop trying to boss everyone and do what God wants you to do. Humble yourselves: realize that you have broken the commands and the heart of God. Realize that without God's help, you cannot make it.

(OVER)

I expect if Peter could have been with me as I walked through that basilica, he would have been ashamed, embarrassed and telling everyone to leave him out of things and follow Christ. He wouldn't want statues representing him. He wouldn't want his name in nine foot tall letters adorning the inside of the building. He wouldn't want his grave to be a place of worship, honor or remembrance. It struck me that those who designed and built that place never really understood Peter. They thought they were doing something great. But had they really understood Peter, like our verse presents, they would have known that he would have been opposed to all this glory, honor and attention. He would have reminded us that it is not about him, but the Lord. It is the Lord who died for our sins, not Peter. It was the Lord who brings salvation, not Peter. The honor goes to God. The glory goes to God.

How easily these folks misunderstood the real Peter. The Peter in the Gospels is different than the Peter in Acts. He changed. His faith grew. He became courageous, bold and passionate about the Lord. His confidence soared. In the Gospels, he talks too much. He is often scared. His faith wavers often. Looking at Peter in the gospels, we could conclude that he wasn't much spiritually. But he changed. It is easy to think we know someone just from one small sliver of time that we spend with them. Maybe, all we see is a guy at work. From that we conclude what he is like. But he may be different at home. He may be all business at work and at home, around his family, he is outgoing, fun and caring. We'd never know that from the image at work. Biographers will try to paint a picture of the person that they are writing about from the research that they have gathered. A few letters. A few interviews. An image unfolds, but often that's not the complete picture.

Each of us has issues and sins that we struggle with. We keep most of those things way from the eyes of others. We can look at a couple in the congregation and conclude that they are happy, warm and in love. Yet, one of them may be very lonely. We can see a man teach a Bible class and conclude that he is very strong spiritually, yet, he has some secret sins that he really worries about. Even a husband and a wife may hide things from each other. This may go on for years and years.

However, in all of this, God is the one who truly knows us. He sees all. He sees through the smoke and the excuses. He understands us. And, it is the Lord, with this complete knowledge of us, who continues to love us, believe in us and wants us to spend forever with Him. This is the aspect that many have a hard time with. We try to look good so we can win God's favor and attention. But He sees through all of that. He knows us as we really are, and still He loves us. That's what we have a hard time believing. We tend to think that if God really knew us, He wouldn't want anything to do with us. There are times we day dream in church services. There are times when we could be there but we just didn't feel like it. There are times when we haven't talked to Him in days. There are times when we complain more than we are thankful. There are times when this world sees more exciting to us than it ought to be. And for that, we fear, if He knew this, He'd have nothing to do with us. But He does. He knows and He still loves. He knows and He still wants to forgive. He knows and He hasn't given up on us.

To me, this is amazing. The folks that built St. Peter's really didn't know Peter. And, it may be that very few, if any really knows you. But God does. He knows, and He cares. He knows and He loves.

Amazing!

Roger Shouse

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